Fatal Overdose Surveillance in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Craig Costigan, Carrie Thomas Goetz, Meghna Patel

Pennsyvlania Department of Health, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, United States

Objective

Review strategies and policies employed to get independent C/MEs from a state with a de-centralized C/ME system to start reporting overdose death data to the Department of Health. Summarize flexibility needed to collect overdose death data from C/MEs with a variety of case management systems/methods. Preview how overdose death data is displayed on the Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs' Interactive Data Report.

Introduction

The severity of the nationwide opioid epidemic necessitates a fully-informed and evidenced-based response on the part of public health organizations. To support that aim, Pennsylvania applied for and received the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Enhanced State Opioid Overdose Surveillance (ESOOS) grant.

Methods

Today's poster presentation will outline issues with recruiting coroners/medical examiners (C/MEs) for participation who are unique to jurisdictions that utilize a decentralized C/ME system, and how those issues were addressed. Those issues include tension between state and county governments, time and staff concerns on the part of C/MEs, and the variety of case management systems that the C/MEs use.

Results

At the beginning of this project, two out of 67 counties were submitting comprehensive toxicology and risk factor data to the Pennsylvania Department of Health. As of September 2018, thirty-eight out of 67 counties are submitting death data. The presentation will also discuss what data is collected and how it is reported.

Conclusions

The outreach strategy successfully increased the number of coroners and medical examiners that submit death data.