

The Rapid Growth of Drug-Overdose Deaths in Rural Counties from 1999-2012

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Background

Drug-overdose deaths (DOD) have been rising rapidly nationally in the US since the mid 1990s. Social, physical, and economical differences have been recognized as factors contributing to health differences between urban and rural communities. The aim of this study is to evaluate if a relationship exists between DOD and level of urbanization.

Methods

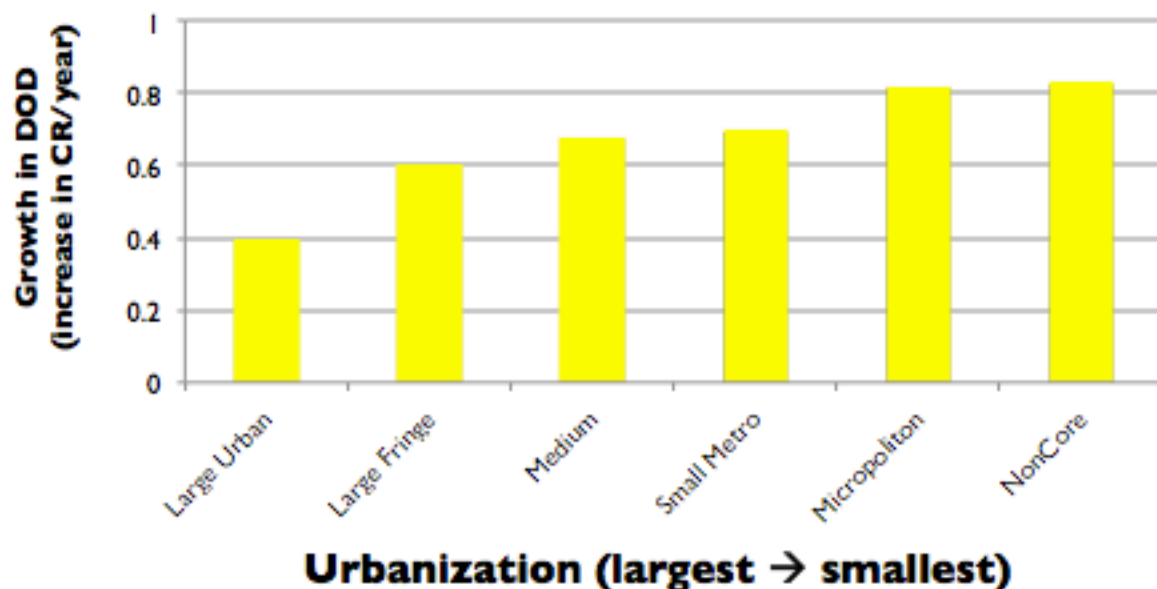
Utilizing data available for query by the Center for Disease Control, Wide-ranging Online Data for Epidemiologic Research (CDC WONDER), we analyzed DOD between 1999-2012. Cause of death is based upon death certificates and is classified by a corresponding ICD-10 code. Urbanization is based upon the 2006 National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) Urban-Rural Classification Scheme.

Discussion and Conclusion

These data suggest that while the incidence of DOD increased for all populations, rural communities saw the largest growth. Multiple factors have been previously implicated in such trends: 1) economic stressors creating vulnerability to drug use; 2) greater community network and connections which may facilitate drug diversion and distribution; 3) lack of access to appropriate resources for drug rehabilitation. Further efforts should be made to identify causes of such disparity so that solutions may be sought.

Results

Drug-Overdose Deaths vs Urbanization



Drug-Overdose Deaths, 1999-2012

