

# Do Good Samaritan Laws and Laws Expanding Naloxone Access Decrease Opioid Death Rates?

Elise G ter Haar, Sahaphume Srisuma<sup>1,3</sup>, Christopher O Hoyte<sup>1,2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Rocky Mountain Poison & Drug Center, Denver Health and Hospital Authority, Denver, Colorado, USA

<sup>2</sup> Department of Emergency Medicine, University of Colorado School of Medicine, Aurora, Colorado, USA

<sup>3</sup> Ramathibodi Poison Center, Ramathibodi Hospital, Mahidol University, Bangkok, Thailand

## Introduction

- Increasing opioid abuse and opioid death rates in recent years have been well documented.
- Laws to expand naloxone access and provide immunity to individuals calling 911 have been promoted to prevent opioid deaths.
- In Colorado, a Good Samaritan law passed in Colorado in 2012 and a third-party naloxone prescribing law passed in Colorado in 2013.
- Studies comparing opioid death rates before and after implementation of these types of laws have been limited.

## Hypothesis

- With programs prescribing naloxone, opioid death rates in Denver County will decrease following implementation of a Good Samaritan law and again with a third-party naloxone prescribing law.

## Methods

- This is a retrospective observational research study comparing the opioid death rate before and after implementation of a Good Samaritan law and a third-party naloxone prescribing law.
- Numbers of deaths due to opioids were obtained from the Denver County Medical Examiner's Office from January 2008 - September 2014.
- Numbers of estimated opioid exposures in Denver County were obtained from the National Poison Data System.
- Local programs prescribing naloxone to opioid users and third parties provided their numbers of naloxone prescriptions and reversals.

## Limitations

- This study has several limitations, including the time frame used for comparison, the self reporting of the naloxone reversals, additional potential contributing factors to the death rate and the small sample size.

## Results

- The opioid death rate in Denver County decreased initially following the passage of a Good Samaritan law in 2012, but increased following implementation of a naloxone third-party prescribing law in 2013.
- Opioid death rates stayed steady at 19-21% from 2010-2012, with a fall to 12% in 2013 and a rise to 26% in 2014, despite a rise in naloxone prescriptions and naloxone reversals in 2014.
- Death rates did rise from 18% in 2008 to 44% in 2009 with no clear explanation.
- The number of naloxone use by opioid users were 54 cases, 89 cases, 57 cases in 2012, 2013, and 2014 respectively.
- The number of naloxone use by third parties were 40 cases, and 107 cases in 2013, and 2014 respectively.

**Table 1: Opioid exposures and opioid caused deaths by year**

Category/Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Opioid Exposure (n)	154	125	126	156	146	134	102
Opioid Caused Deaths (n)	28	56	24	33	31	17	27
Death rate (%)	18.18	44.8	19.05	21.15	21.23	12.69	26.47

## Conclusions

- Laws to expand access to naloxone and provide immunity to individuals calling 911 in overdose cases may not decrease the opioid death rate; further assessments of current interventions are warranted.

