

## OPIOID OVERDOSE AND NALOXONE ACCESS AMONG PEOPLE WHO RECENTLY USED OPIOIDS OR RECEIVED OPIOID AGONIST TREATMENT IN AUSTRALIA: THE ETHOS ENGAGE STUDY

Conway A<sup>1,2</sup>, Valerio H<sup>1</sup>, Peacock A<sup>3</sup>, Degenhardt L<sup>3</sup>, Hayllar J<sup>4</sup>, Harrod M<sup>5</sup>, Henderson C<sup>5</sup>, Read P<sup>1,6</sup>, Gilliver R<sup>6</sup>, Amin J<sup>1,7</sup>, Christmass M<sup>8,9</sup>, Dunlop A<sup>10,11</sup>, Montebello M<sup>12</sup>, Whitton G<sup>13</sup>, Reid D<sup>14</sup>, Lam T<sup>15</sup>, Alavi M<sup>1</sup>, Silk D<sup>1</sup>, Marshall AD<sup>1,2</sup>, Dore GJ<sup>1</sup>, Treloar C<sup>2</sup>, and Grebely J<sup>1</sup> on behalf of the ETHOS II Study Group

<sup>1</sup> The Kirby Institute, UNSW Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia

<sup>2</sup> Centre for Social Research in Health, UNSW Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia

<sup>3</sup> National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney, Sydney, NSW, Australia

<sup>4</sup> Alcohol and Drug Service, Metro North Mental Health, Metro North Hospital and Health Service, Brisbane, QLD, Australia

<sup>5</sup> NSW Users and AIDS Association, NSW, Australia

<sup>6</sup> Kirketon Road Centre, Sydney, NSW, Australia

<sup>7</sup> Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW, Australia

<sup>8</sup> Next Step Drug and Alcohol Services, Mental Health Commission, WA, Australia

<sup>9</sup> National Drug Research Institute, Curtin University, WA, Australia

<sup>10</sup> Centre for Translational Neuroscience and Mental Health, Hunter Medical Research Institute & University of Newcastle, Newcastle, NSW, Australia

<sup>11</sup> Drug and Alcohol Clinical Services, Hunter New England Local Health District, Newcastle, NSW, Australia

<sup>12</sup> NSLHD Drug and Alcohol Services, NSW, Australia

<sup>13</sup> Drug Health Service, South West Sydney LHD, NSW, Australia

<sup>14</sup> The Orana Centre, Illawarra Shoalhaven LHD, Wollongong, NSW, Australia

<sup>15</sup> Drug Health, Western Sydney Local Health District, Sydney, NSW, Australia

### Background:

Overdose is a major cause of morbidity and mortality among people who use opioids. Naloxone can reverse opioid overdoses and can be distributed and administered with minimal training. This study estimated recent non-fatal opioid overdose and naloxone access in people who recently used opioids or received opioid agonist treatment (OAT).

### Methods:

ETHOS Engage (Enhancing Treatment of Hepatitis C in Opioid Substitution Settings) is an observational study of people who inject drugs in Australia. Participants self-completed a tablet-based questionnaire. Logistic regression models were used to estimate the unadjusted and adjusted odds ratio for non-fatal opioid overdose and naloxone access.

### Results:

Between May 2018-September 2019, 1,284 participants who recently used opioids or received OAT were enrolled (62% aged > 40 years; 35% female, 84% receiving OAT, 62% injected drugs in the preceding month). Recent opioid overdose (preceding 12 months) was reported by 7% of participants. Compared to people receiving OAT with no additional opioid use, recent use of opioids, alcohol and benzodiazepines (preceding 6 months) was associated with recent opioid overdose [OR 3.72; 95%CI: 1.64, 8.45]. Lifetime naloxone access was reported by 17% of participants. Compared to people receiving OAT with no additional opioid use, recent use of opioids, alcohol and benzodiazepines was associated with a higher odds of naloxone access (OR 2.15; 95%CI 1.30-3.53). Among people who recently injected opioids (n=776), use of alcohol and benzodiazepines was associated with an increased odds of recent opioid overdose (OR 2.76; 95%CI 1.41-5.43) compared

to injecting opioids alone. Among 92 people with recent opioid overdose, 68% (n=63) had never received take-home naloxone.

**Conclusions:**

Among people recently using opioids or receiving OAT, recent use of benzodiazepines and alcohol is associated with increased chance of opioid overdose. Naloxone coverage is low across all groups. Additional interventions are needed to scale up naloxone provision.

**Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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