

OPIOID USE INITIATION

Jackie Zaney

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PRESCRIPTION OPIOID USE INITIATION AMONG USERS

This community-based participatory research (CBPR) project seeks to examine the role of first exposure to prescription opioid substance use. Substance use trends show an increase in prescription drugs as the first source of opioids and of misuse among young adults (Lankenau et al., 2012). Researchers and community members will work together to understand this problem, brainstorm solutions, and evaluate public concern. Consequences associated with prescription opioid use are addiction, overdose, and death (UNDOC, World Drug Report 2017).

BACKGROUND

Opioids do not discriminate, anyone who starts to use is at-risk of prolonged use, misuse, and addiction (Kingston et al., 2017). To better understand first experiences with opioids we will work together with the North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition (NCHRC) a local nonprofit organization in Wilmington, NC. The results of this project will be accessible to the public for empowering the community and building upon existing knowledge concerning opioid use.

METHODS

Our research questions revolve around the circumstances surrounding first use, such as when people start use and how they get access to the opioids, to figure out if there is an association between age of first use and initial source. These types of questions will be used in an attempt to better understand the association between age of first use and primary source. Also, the circumstances of initial use and the relationship

to future use will be analyzed. For the purposes of this study primary sources are either the medical system (doctor prescribed) or via other sources (friends or drug dealers).

This CBPR project uses quantitative methods including a paper survey and statistical data analysis. Total sample size = 20 individuals. Dates of collection began on February 20th, 2018 again on February 26th, March 9th, and final pick up was on March 16th, 2018. By investigating the role of primary sources and age of onset, we expand knowledge on the patterns of use that follow initial use. **Predictors of interest are age of first use and primary source of exposure which provide access to addictive substances and influence level of risk for patterns of use that follow initial use.**

RESULTS

Among the sample 45% of respondents are male and 55% female. Of the sample 94.7% of participants are white and 5.3% nonwhite. Respondents over thirty years old account for 65% of the sample and 35% are under the age of thirty. Among those in the sample 78.9% were under the age of 18 at first use and 21.1% of the sample report age of onset in adulthood. 84.2% of the sample are current opioid substance users and 15.8% are not using opioids or are using substitutes.

Table 1. Sample Characteristics
Valid Percent (N)

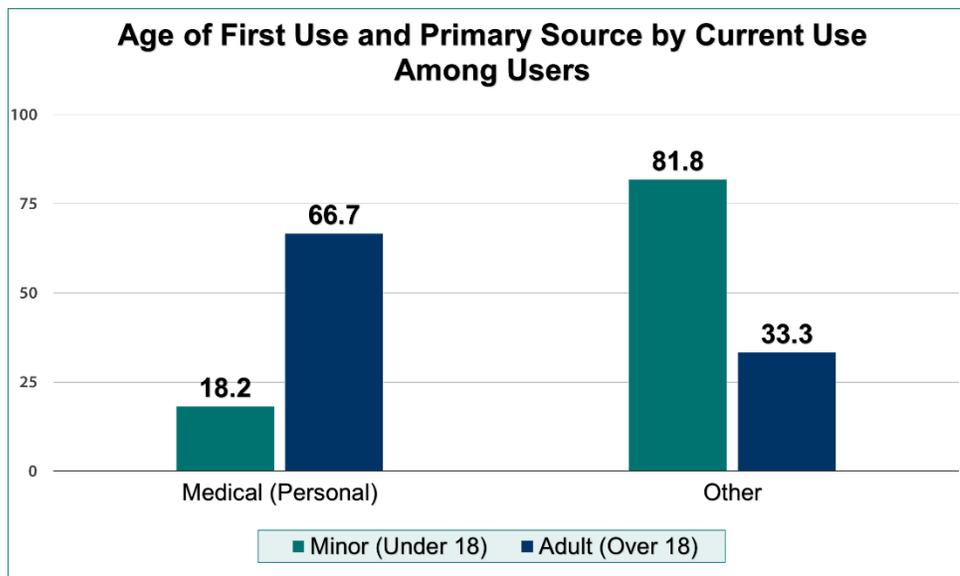
Gender	
Male	45.0 (9)
Female	55.0 (11)
Race	
White	94.7 (18)
Nonwhite	5.3 (1)
Age	
Under 30	35.0 (7)
Over 30	65.0 (13)
Age of First Use	
Minor	78.9 (15)
Adult	21.1 (4)
Primary Source	
Medical	33.3 (6)
Other	66.7 (12)
Current Use	
Yes	84.2 (16)
No	15.8 (3)

Table 2. Percentage of age of first use by primary source

Primary Source	Age of First Use	
	Minor (Under 18)	Adult (Over 18)
Medical (Personal)	21.4	75.0
Other	78.6	25.0
Chi ²	4.018	
p-value	.045	

Among current users in the sample, of those who were under the age of eighteen at first use 78.6 % reported that they got access outside of the medical system compared to respondents who were adults at the age of onset with 75.0 % that report primary source of exposure other than a medical healthcare provider. Regardless of age of first use 33.3% of participants report initial obtainment via medical source, in contrast to the 66.7% that report primary source of opioids as other than medical. Most participants report primary source to opioid use as other than medical, although it is most likely reported by those who initiate opioid use before adulthood. We conclude there is an association between age of first use and primary source ($\chi^2(1) = 4.018, p < .05$).

Figure 1. Chi² of age of first use and primary source BY current use



Among current users who report first use as a minor, 81.8% report a primary source of exposure to opioids other than the medical system. Of those who were adults at age of first use and report their primary source as through medical, 66.7% are current users. It is important to note that Figure 1. is representative of only current users in the

sample, with percentages concerning age of first use and primary source of exposure. The portion of non-current users in the sample were cut out of the figure because among minors at age of first use 0% reported a primary source as through a medical provider. Also, amid non-current users, of those that report their age of first use in adulthood 0% indicated a primary source other than the medical system. These response categories are constants, which made interpreting the figure more confusing, and the missing percentages of non-current users are in Table 3.

Table 3. Chi² of age of first use and primary source BY current use

	Current Use			
	Current Users		Non-current Users	
	Age of First Use			
Primary Source	Minor (Under 18)	Adult (Over 18)	Minor (Under 18)	Adult (Over 18)
Medical (Personal)	18.2	66.7	0.0	100.0
Other	81.8	33.3	100.0	0.0
Chi ²	5.236			
p-value	.022			

A chi-square value close to zero shows the variables are independent, but since the chi-square here is 5.236 the value shows there is an association between variables. We conclude that there is an association between age of first use, primary source, and current use ($X^2(1) = 5.236, p < .05$).

DISCUSSION

Our findings suggest that there was a significant relationship between age of first use and primary source. Those under the age of eighteen at first use are most likely to report their primary source as other than a medical healthcare provider. Only a fifth of those who first used in adulthood are currently using compared to four-fifths of minors who are currently using. All of those in the sample who initially obtained opioids through the medical system during adulthood are currently not using opioids or are using

substitutes. The results show that there is an association between age of first use, primary source, and current use.

RESOURCES & ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition website: www.nchrc.org

REFERENCES

Kingston, S., Rose, M., Cohen-Serrins, J., & Knight, E. (2017). "A Qualitative Study of the Context of Child and Adolescent Substance Use Initiation and Patterns of Use in the First Year for Early and Later Initiators". *PLOSone*, 12(1), e0170794. Retrieved October 22nd, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0170794>

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