

Letters

RESEARCH LETTER

Postincarceration Fatal Overdoses After Implementing Medications for Addiction Treatment in a Statewide Correctional System

As the epidemic of opioid use in the United States continues to shift from prescription opioids to illicit drugs,¹ more people living with opioid use disorder are encountering the criminal justice system. Most US correctional facilities do not continue or initiate medications for addiction treatment (MAT).² This is especially unfortunate given the higher rates of opioid overdose immediately after release from incarceration.³

In July 2016, a new model of screening and protocolized treatment with MAT (including methadone, buprenorphine, or naltrexone) launched at the Rhode Island Department of Corrections (RIDOC), a unified prison/jail. A community vendor with statewide capacity to provide MAT after release was engaged to help run the program in November 2016, and all sites were operational by January 2017. Individuals arriving into RIDOC while receiving MAT were to be maintained on their respective medications regimen without tapering or discontinuing their medications. Contemporaneously, a system of 12 community-located Centers of Excellence in MAT was established to promote transitions and referrals of inmates released from RIDOC. This analysis examines preliminary association of the program with overall overdose fatalities and deaths from overdose among those individuals who were recently incarcerated.

Methods | We conducted a retrospective cohort analysis linking data from the Rhode Island Office of State Medical Examiners for all unintentional deaths from overdose occurring from January 1 to June 30, 2016, and from January 1 to June 30, 2017, to data from RIDOC inmate releases. Decedents were defined as individuals who were recently incarcerated if they died within 12 months of release from RIDOC. Descriptive statistics of decedents include summarized demographics, the status of incarceration, and the number of fentanyl-related overdoses. Aggregate data of inmates released from RIDOC, counts of naloxone provided to inmates after release, and the monthly receipt of MAT were also reported. Risk ratios (RRs) and 95% CIs were used to compare the proportion of decedents who were recently incarcerated in 2017 with those who were incarcerated in 2016, since individual-level MAT program enrollment data were unavailable. The number needed to treat was estimated from the risk difference of recent incarceration between the 2 periods. χ^2 Tests compared differences in decedent characteristics between 2016 and 2017. Statistical analysis was performed using SAS program, version 9.3 (SAS Institute Inc) with 2-sided $P < .05$ considered statistically significant. The Rhode Island Hospital institutional review board approved this protocol with a waiver of written informed consent.

Results | Statewide in Rhode Island, there were 179 overdose deaths from January 1, 2016, to June 30, 2016, compared with 157 overdose deaths during the same period in 2017, a reduc-

Table 1. Characteristics and Number of Deaths From Accidental Overdose in Rhode Island, Both Overall and Among Individuals With Recent Incarceration^a

Characteristic	Decedents With Recent Incarceration, No. (%)		Overall No. of Decedents (%)	
	First 6 mo of 2016 (n = 26)	First 6 mo of 2017 (n = 9)	First 6 mo of 2016 (n = 179)	First 6 mo of 2017 (n = 157)
Sex				
Male	24 (92.3)	7 (77.8)	123 (68.7)	94 (59.9)
Female	2 (7.7)	2 (22.2)	56 (31.3)	63 (40.1)
Race/ethnicity^b				
White	25 (96.2)	8 (88.9)	168 (93.9)	137 (87.3) ^c
Other	1 (3.8)	1 (11.1)	11 (6.1)	20 (12.7)
Age, y				
18-29	8 (30.8)	2 (22.2)	43 (24.0)	23 (14.6) ^d
30-39	9 (34.6)	4 (44.4)	34 (19.0)	54 (34.4)
40-49	6 (23.1)	3 (33.3)	40 (22.3)	35 (22.3)
≥50	3 (11.5)	0 (0.0)	62 (34.6)	45 (28.7)
Died of overdose attributed to fentanyl	16 (61.5)	8 (88.9)	92 (51.4)	92 (58.6)
Length of incarceration, median (IQR), mo	30 (4-70)	23 (9-113)	NA	NA
Time since release from incarceration to death, median (IQR), d	112 (12-223)	190 (49-241)	NA	NA
Died within 30 d of release from incarceration	10 (38.5)	1 (11.1)	NA	NA

Abbreviations: IQR, interquartile range; NA, not applicable.

^a Recent incarceration was defined as within 12 months of release from the Rhode Island Department of Corrections.

^b Race as recorded by the Rhode Island Office of State Medical Examiners at the time of autopsy or case review.

^c χ^2 Test comparing all decedents, January 1 to June 30, 2016, vs January 1 to June 30, 2017, $P = .04$.

^d χ^2 Test comparing all decedents, January 1 to June 30, 2016, vs January 1 to June 30, 2017, $P = .007$.

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COMMENT & RESPONSE

Mendelian Randomization Concerns

To the Editor With interest we read the article by Hartwig et al.¹ The authors used 2-sample mendelian randomization² to investigate the role of C-reactive protein (CRP) in schizophrenia. Their main finding listed in the abstract and body is a pooled odds ratio estimate of 0.9 (random effects 95% CI, 0.84-0.97; $P = .005$) per 2-fold increment in CRP levels in their inverse variance-weighted random-effects model.

First, by comparing the input CRP-associated single-nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) data from the original CRP genome-wide study³ (see eTable 2 in the Supplement by Hartwig et al¹), it came to our attention that the effect allele at rs9987289, the only variant “classified as influential,”⁴ differs between the studies by Hartwig et al¹ and Dehghan et al.³ We invite the authors to comment on their choosing the G allele as the effect allele instead of using the data in Table 2 of Dehghan et al.³

Second, the authors refer to a study by Prins et al⁴ in which mendelian randomization analyses were performed using genetic risk scores of liberal CRP-associated SNPs as instrumental variables also in schizophrenia. These genetic risk scores are derived from the original CRP study,³ the same data resource Hartwig et al¹ used. Both groups extracted 18 SNPs. Prins et al⁴ did not extract 3 SNPs from Psychiatric Genomics Consortium schizophrenia summary statistics, resulting in 15 SNPs for their actual analyses. Aiming to elucidate the true effect size for CRP-associated SNPs in risk for schizophrenia, we tried to replicate both articles' findings. To that end, we applied our own scripts (https://github.com/Bochao1/MR_CRP_SCZ) and the R packages TwoSampleMR and MendelianRandomization to perform the same inverse variance-weighted random-effects model as used by Hartwig et al¹ for their main finding, as well as 3 of their 4 other models. To get odds ratio estimates for schizophrenia per 2-fold CRP increments, we used the same equation¹ as follows:

$$\left(\frac{\text{OR}}{\text{OR}_0}\right)^2$$

However, neither when considering G at rs9987289 as the effect allele nor when considering A as the effect allele did we obtain equal inverse variance-weighted random-effects results to Hartwig et al¹ (odds ratio, 0.90 per 2-fold CRP incre-

ment; 95% CI, 0.85-0.96; $P = .001$; and odds ratio, 0.93; 95% CI, 0.86-0.99; $P = .030$, respectively).⁵

Our findings hint that the actual effect size for CRP-associated SNPs to increase risk of schizophrenia may differ from the findings of Hartwig et al.¹ To improve future replication opportunities, we propose that authors refer to publicly accessible statistical analysis codes (eg, <https://github.com/>) and R packages and outline their data extraction procedures.

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Published Online: March 7, 2018. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2018.0035

Conflict of Interest Disclosures: None reported.

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In Reply The comments by Lin et al on our mendelian randomization analysis of the association of circulating C-reactive protein (CRP) with schizophrenia risk¹ indicate their concern over the proper extraction and harmonization of data within 2-sample mendelian randomization studies. We agree that this is an important topic² that is vital for ensuring the reproducibility and reliability of scientific findings, and we appreciate the opportunity to provide some clarifications.

Specifically, they questioned why we considered the G allele, rather than the A allele, as the effect allele for the rs9987289 variant (one of the CRP instruments). It is true that the A allele was indicated as the effect allele in Table 2 of the study by Dehghan et al,³ which shows summary association results for the replication and discovery plus replication stages.

Table 1 in the study by Dehghan et al³ indicates that the G allele was the effect allele in the discovery stage. They reported