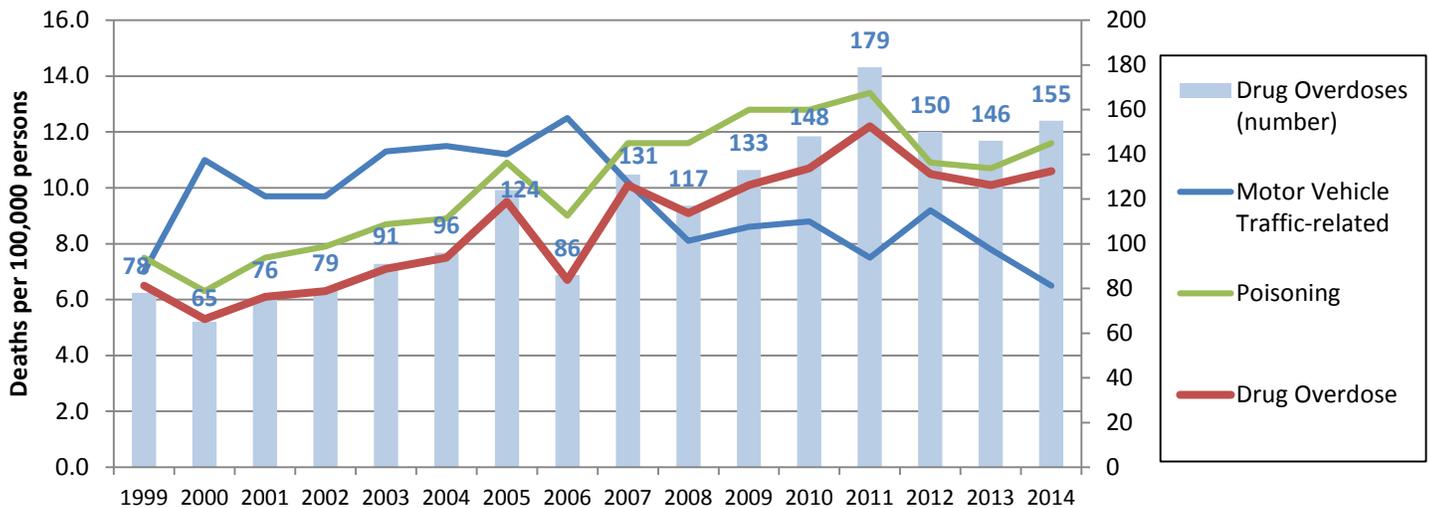




A Public Health Crisis Continues

Poisoning is the leading mechanism of injury-related deaths in Hawaii, and drugs cause 9 out of 10 poisoning deaths. The average annual number of drug poisoning deaths, also called overdoses, nearly doubled from the 1999-2003 period (78 deaths) to the 2010-2014 period (156 deaths). Drug overdoses surpassed motor vehicle traffic crashes as the leading cause of fatal injuries in 2008 (Figure 1). In 2014, the poisoning death rate was 11.6 deaths per 100,000 residents, and the drug overdose death rate was 10.6, compared to a motor vehicle traffic-related death rate of 6.5 deaths per 100,000 residents.

Figure 1. Drug overdose death rates* compared to motor vehicle-related death rates, Hawaii residents, 1999-2014
(Lines show age-adjusted death rates (per 100,000 residents), while actual number of fatalities is indicated by bar and label.)



Drugs Caused 9 out of 10 Poisoning Deaths

From 2010 through 2014, drugs and medications –prescription drugs, illicit drugs, and over-the-counter medications, - were the underlying cause of death for 91% of all poisoning deaths. Adjusted mortality rates were nearly doubled among male residents, compared to females. All of the victims were 14 years of age or older, and most (87%) were 25 to 64 years of age. Mortality rates were significantly higher among 45 to 54 year-old residents, compared to any other age group listed in Table 1. Adjusted fatality rates were statistically comparable for residents of Hawaii, Honolulu and Maui counties, although these comparisons are limited by the relatively small number of victims.

Table 1. Drug overdose deaths: Demographic characteristics, Hawaii residents, 2010-2014

| | | Average annual number | Percent | Average annual rate per 100,000 residents |
|----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|---------|---|
| Gender | Female | 51 | 33% | 8.6 |
| | Male | 104 | 67% | 16.6 |
| Age (in years)* | 15-24 | 8 | 5% | 4.1 |
| | 25-44 | 53 | 33% | 14.0 |
| | 45-54 | 48 | 32% | 25.8 |
| | 55 and older | 47 | 31% | 12.1 |
| County of residence | Hawaii | 20 | 14% | 12.0 |
| | Honolulu | 105 | 65% | 12.2 |
| | Kauai | 5 | 3% | - |
| | Maui | 26 | 18% | 17.5 |

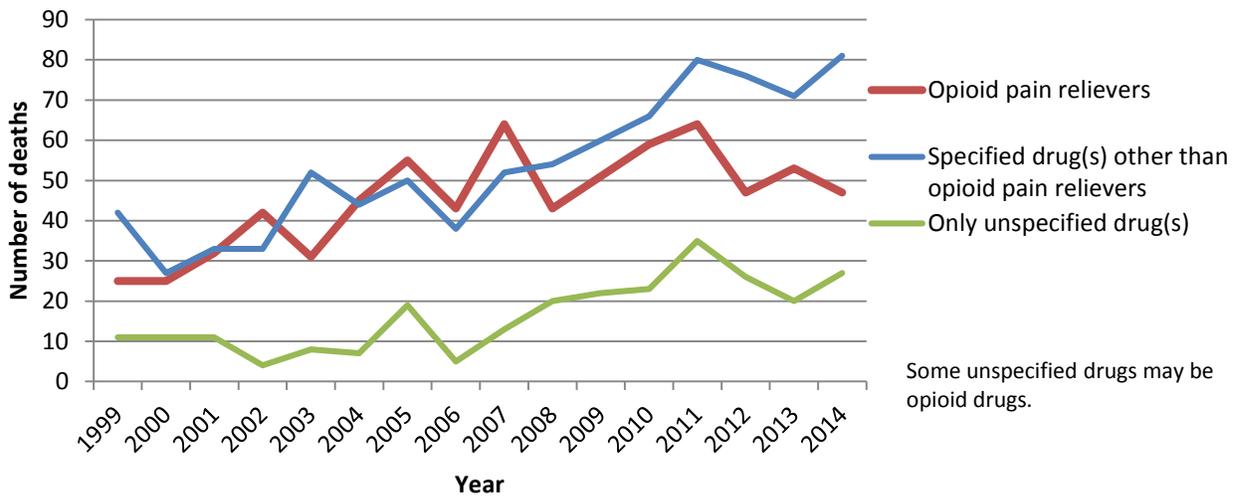


Opioid Pain Relievers Contributed to 35% of the Drug Overdose Deaths

Opioid pain relievers, such as oxycodone or hydrocodone, contributed to more than one-third (35%, or 270) of the 778 drug overdose deaths from 2010 through 2014. This may be an underestimate, as the percent of drug overdose deaths that had only unspecified drug(s) listed as contributing to the death ranged from 14% to 20% over the 5-year period.

(All data in this factsheet is taken from death certificates archived by the Hawaii Department of Health.)

Figure 2. Number of drug overdose deaths involving opioid pain relievers and other drugs, [State] residents, 1999-2014



Addressing the Issue

Key strategies include conducting surveillance through data linkage, promotion and evaluation of the Hawaii's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PMP), educating about promising policies for reducing prescription drug use and abuse, and implementing and evaluating effective methods for educating providers on appropriate prescribing practices.

In an effort to improve understanding of prescription drug use, access and usage of the PMP, the Hawaii State Department of Health (DOH), Emergency Medical Services and Injury Prevention System Branch partnered with the Department of Public Safety (DPS), Hawaii Narcotics Enforcement Division (NED). Efforts include: 1) surveying licensed medical providers regarding their general knowledge of the PMP and educating them about its usefulness, 2) linking data from death certificates and autopsy records to the PMP database, and 3) publishing and disseminating prescriber survey results.

Other surveillance efforts: For a clearer picture of public perception and use of prescription drugs, four questions were added to the Hawaii Behavioral Risk Surveillance System (BRFSS) in 2015 and 2016. The survey data is collected continually, and complete results will be available by 2017 to ensure sufficient sample size to describe this issue on a population level.

Key state and community partners working on prescription drug abuse and misuse prevention are the DPS, DOH, Hawaii Advisory Commission on Drug Abuse and Controlled Substances (HACDAC), Drug Policy Forum of Hawai'i (DPFHI), Harm Reduction Hawaii, Narcotics Policy Work Group, and Project - Community Health Outreach Workers (C.H.O.W.). Support for provider education about prescription drug abuse and promotion of provider PMP usage is funded by Core VIPP grant.