During the Pandemic, 3 in 10 Adults in the United States have Reported Symptoms of Anxiety or Depressive Disorder

In the spring of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic quickly changed the lives of Americans with social distancing, fear of infection, and economic instability. In 2019, reports showed that 1 in 10 adults reported symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder. In comparison to during the pandemic, reports have shown that 3 in 10 adults in the U.S have reported symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder. Indiana saw a similar rate, with 27.4% of adults reporting symptoms of anxiety or depressive disorder during the pandemic. With this being evidence for worsening mental health conditions in Indiana, this report will explore the rates of suicide and overdose emergency department (ED) visits and deaths from overdoses and suicides.

COVID-19 and Mental Health in Indiana
Examining How Hoosiers are Adjusting to the New Normal

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO INCREASED MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS DURING THE PANDEMIC

- Isolation
- Fear of Infection
- Economic Hardship
- Decreased access to mental health services
- School closures
- Loss of family member or friend

Are Patients Delaying Emergency Care Visits Due to the Pandemic?

By analyzing 2019 and 2020 ED discharge data, it was identified that 3 in 4 counties saw a decrease in ED visits for overdoses. This is a concern as fear of the virus may have decreased access to treatment, resulting in unmet mental health needs.

Overdose ED Visits: Rural Vs. Urban Classification

When comparing between 2019 and 2020, the rate of overdose ED visits have increased in both rural and urban areas. While urban areas are more often associated with higher rates of mental health problems, individuals living in rural areas may have less accessibility to hospitals, mental health services, and preventative care than their urban counterparts. This comparison gives insight into the burden COVID-19 has placed on both the rural and urban communities within Indiana, helping to inform future prevention, intervention, and treatment efforts across the state.

Suicide ED Visits: Rural Vs. Urban Classification

Unlike overdose ED visits, the rate of suicide ED visits decreased between the years 2019 and 2020 in both rural and urban areas. A widespread fear of infection, paired with a limited number of hospital beds, left many individuals delaying emergency care for serious mental health challenges and medical conditions.

3 OUT OF 4 COUNTIES REPORTED AN INCREASE IN ED VISITS FOR OVERDOSES

3 OUT OF 4 COUNTIES REPORTED AN INCREASE IN ED VISITS FOR OVERDOSES

*All rates were calculated using hospital discharge outpatient and inpatient emergency service data.
Through an analysis of 2019 and 2020 Vital Records mortality data, sixty-two percent of counties in Indiana reported an increase in overdose deaths. The increase in deaths was more substantial for urban counties.

The pleasurable feelings associated with drug usage cause reinforcement of unhealthy behaviors. Addiction is a disease of isolation, which aggravates depression and anxiety. Substance use was a method that many people may have used as a way to cope with the burden of stress and negative emotions related to COVID-19.

Every age group, except for ages 65 and older, experienced an increase in overdose deaths from 2019 to 2020. The age groups of 25-34 and 35-44 saw the largest increases in overdose deaths in 2020 compared to 2019.

Though less than the number of overdose deaths, Indiana counties reported a forty percent increase in suicide deaths from 2019 to 2020. This highlights the devastating mental health burden that the stress and negative emotions surrounding COVID-19 placed on Hoosiers.

A sense of community cohesion and belonging is a protective factor against suicide risk. It is possible that suicide deaths did not see much of a change from 2019 to 2020 due to a “we’re all in this together” mentality.

Conclusions and Interpretations

Visits to the ED within Indiana, specifically for suicides and overdoses, decreased during the COVID-19 pandemic due to fear of infection. Overdose deaths drastically increased in 2020 compared to 2019. These high rates demonstrate the need for public health and harm reduction strategies for substance use, especially during times of increased stress and social isolation, when it is more difficult to receive treatment.

Though suicides stayed roughly the same in 2019 when compared to 2020, increases seen among younger age groups and within rural counties indicate the need for professionals to intervene among vulnerable populations. There is a possibility that there could be a peak in suicide deaths in 2021 due to the pandemic's economic impact.

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To promote, protect, and improve the health and safety of all Hoosiers