

Prescription Opioid Use Fell at a Historic Rate Last Year

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Although the current opioid epidemic has become by far the deadliest drug overdose crisis in US history, there is new hope in the fight against the public health crisis. Data shows that prescription opioid use fell at a historic rate last year.

The new report from the research firm IQVIA Institute for Human Data Science says that prescription opioid use in the US was down 17 percent in 2018. This marks the largest annual decline ever recorded. This is also a breath of fresh air considering that more than 700,000 people have died from drug overdoses since the crisis began in the late 1990s.

This can be attributed to the US government's actions against pharmacists and drug makers that dispense the sometimes lethal painkillers. Big manufacturing companies are being sued for their alleged role in spreading the opioid epidemic. Use of prescription opioids such as OxyContin or Vicodin fell at a record rate last year.

This can also be because physicians are now more hesitant to prescribe opioids, especially in patients whose pain is not actually chronic or severe. While opioids certainly have painkilling benefits, they are also highly addictive and susceptible to misuse.

In 1992, prescription opioid use was at roughly 22 pain pills per adult per year. It even rose to a peak level of 72 pills per US adult in 2011, said IQVIA. But since 2011, use has declined by 43 percent to 34 pills per adult.

The opioid epidemic kills roughly 130 Americans every day. But the new data, unveiled in IQVIA's 2019 report on healthcare trends, provides some hope for combating the national health crisis. Just recently, a new study provided troubling news that the opioid crisis has led to a sharp increase in the death rate for overdoses among teens and young adults.

US lawmakers have been working to combat the health crisis by limiting painkiller prescriptions and supporting addiction treatment efforts. The Justice Department has also been punishing those seen as

responsible for the epidemic.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren and House Oversight Committee Chairman Elijah Cummings recently unveiled a \$100 billion proposal that would fund prevention services and other efforts against the opioid crisis. It would provide resources to programs for those battling addiction.

"Our communities are on the front lines of the epidemic, and they're working hard to fight back," Warren said in an interview about the original CARE Act. "But they can't do it alone. They can't keep nibbling around the edges."

Warren's home state of Massachusetts saw a drug overdose death rate of 31.8 per 100,000 people in 2017. This is far above the national average of 21.7. Click the link to see Columbus's top rehab placement programs.

Warren's proposal reflects the general agreement among experts and activists that the federal government needs to do more on the opioid crisis. The CARE Act would authorize \$100 billion to address drug addiction in the US over the course of 10 years. It will be funded through a previously proposed wealth tax on the super-rich.

Warren explained: "If you have more than \$50 million, we're going to ask you to pay a tax of 2 cents per dollar on every dollar after your fifty-millionth and first. It raises \$2.75 trillion over the next ten years—enough to pay for my plans to cancel student loan debt and provide universal free college, fully fund universal childcare, and end the opioid epidemic. And guess what? we'd still have nearly a trillion dollars left over."

Last month, a former CEO of Rochester Drug Cooperative was indicted on what prosecutors say are the first criminal charges against an executive of a drug company to stem from the opioid problem. Rochester Drug Cooperative is one of the nation's largest drug distributors. The federal government reached a \$20 million settlement with the company over its alleged role in the crisis.

More efforts are being launched against the opioid crisis because even though progress is already being made, the fight is far from over.

If someone in the family is struggling with opioid or alcohol addiction, it is important to seek help. A combination of medical detox and behavioral therapy can go a long way in the fight against drug abuse. But because every individual is affected by addiction differently, a comprehensive program tailored to their specific needs is necessary. Look for a nearby addiction treatment facility today and find out how drug treatment programs work.

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