

“Estimating the Impact of Wide Scale Uptake of Screening and Medications for Opioid Use Disorder in U.S. Prisons and Jails”

Research Objective

How many lives would be saved, if any, if we provided medications for opioid use disorder while people were incarcerated? And what if we successfully connected those people to treatment upon release?

Key Findings

1,840 lives saved by providing medications for OUD to people while they are incarcerated.

4,400 lives saved by retaining those people in treatment post-release.

Methods

- **Step 1:** Count number of opioid overdose deaths per state using National Center for Health Statistics database.
- **Step 2:** Estimate how many occurred in each state one year after release from incarceration using studies from North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Washington, and Rhode Island, ranging from 3% to 25%. Estimate each state’s proportion using Monte Carlo simulation.
- **Step 3:** Estimate lives saved with MOUD in prisons and jails using data from England showing 31% reduction in deaths and Monte Carlo simulation to estimate likelihood for each state.
- **Step 4:** Estimate lives saved with retention in MOUD post-release using data from Australia showing 74% reduction in deaths and Monte Carlo simulation to estimate likelihood for each state.

TAKEAWAYS

Prison and jail-based programs that comprehensively screen and provide treatment with medications for OUD have the potential to save thousands of lives in a high-risk population; however, retention on treatment post-release is a key driver of population level impact.

Sources: Scott, C. K., Dennis, M. L., Grella, C.E., Mischel, A. F., & Carnevale, J. (2021). The impact of the opioid crisis on U.S. state prison systems. *Health & Justice*, 9.