

U.S. DHHS Shares Code with States to Fight Opioid Overdoses

News Staff | November 28, 2018

```
%macro overview_med;
%let seltime = 90;          /* 90-day periods */
/* a */
proc sort data=&DATA_CLEANED;
  by &PATIENT_ID;
run;

data overview_med (keep =   &PATIENT_ID
                          opioid_days
                          all_avg_med
                          max_avg_med &seltime);
  set &data_cleaned (keep =   &PRESCRIPTION_FILL_DATE
                          &PATIENT_ID
                          &STRENGTH_PER_UNIT
                          &QUANTITY_DISPENSED
                          &MME_CONVERSION_FACTOR
                          &DAYS_SUPPLY);

  by &patient_id;
/* b */
array d{&DAYS_IN_TIMEFRAME} _temporary_;
if first.&PATIENT_ID then do;
  do i = 1 to &DAYS_IN_TIMEFRAME;
    d[i] = 0;
  end;
end;
```

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is releasing a toolkit to help state governments and insurers find people at risk of overdosing on opioids.

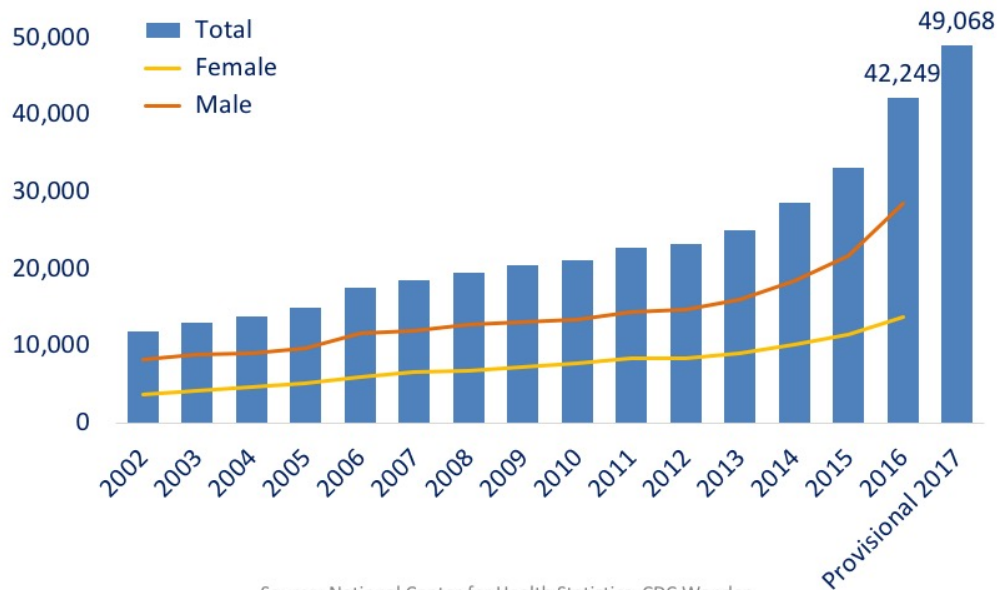
The department's [new toolkit](#), which the DHHS Office of Inspector General is [publishing](#), includes code created by the tech company [SAS](#). The toolkit is essentially made up of two parts: One acting as a step-by-step guide for people with prescription claim data to calculate which beneficiaries are at risk of opioid overdose or misuse, and one dealing with the SAS code for performing the same kinds of calculations.

On its website, the office wrote that the toolkit's target audience "includes Medicare Part D plan sponsors, other private health plans, State Medicaid Fraud Control Units, State prescription drug monitoring programs and researchers."

The prescription claims that those groups have access to can help find people taking high levels of opioid painkillers, a powerful and dangerous class of drugs that has contributed to a modern health epidemic. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, more than 49,000 people [died from opioid-related overdoses in the U.S. in 2017](#) — a number that has been growing annually since 2002, and has at least quadrupled since then.



National Overdose Deaths Number of Deaths Involving Opioids



Source: National Center for Health Statistics, CDC Wonder

There are prescription drug monitoring systems [in all 50 states](#), and [49 state Medicaid Fraud Control Units](#).

DHHS has used the SAS code to identify tens of thousands of people at risk of overdose. The code also identifies people who might be “doctor shopping” — that is, visiting several doctors to receive prescriptions for large amounts of painkillers.

Another provision in the toolkit gives users suggestions on checking data quality.

“We can’t effectively fight the opioid problem if we don’t understand it,” said Dr. R. Kirk Jonas, director of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, in a press release. “Data and analytics are critical to getting citizens the help they need, and thwarting the illegal trafficking of these drugs.”

<http://www.govtech.com/health/US-DHHS-Shares-Code-with-States-to-Fight-Opioid-Overdoses.html>