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## MEMORANDUM

CWCD 268-2020

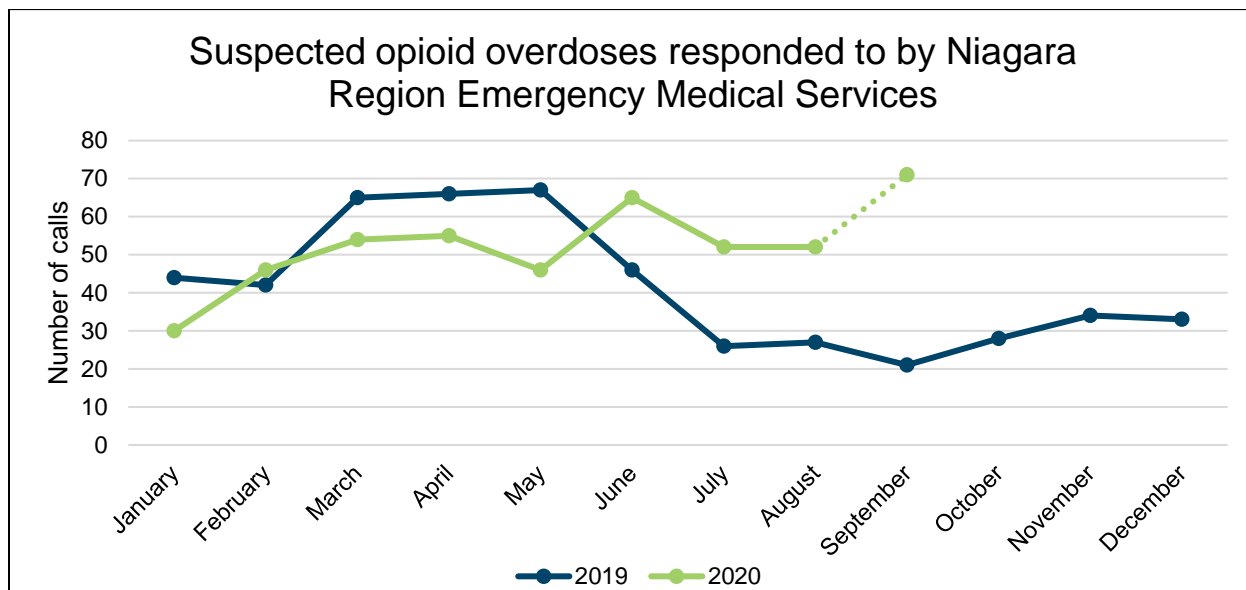
**Subject: Opioid Work Update**  
**Date: October 2, 2020**  
**To: Board of Health**  
**From: Dr. Andrea Feller, Associate Medical Officer of Health**

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We have important updates around the opioid overdose epidemic.

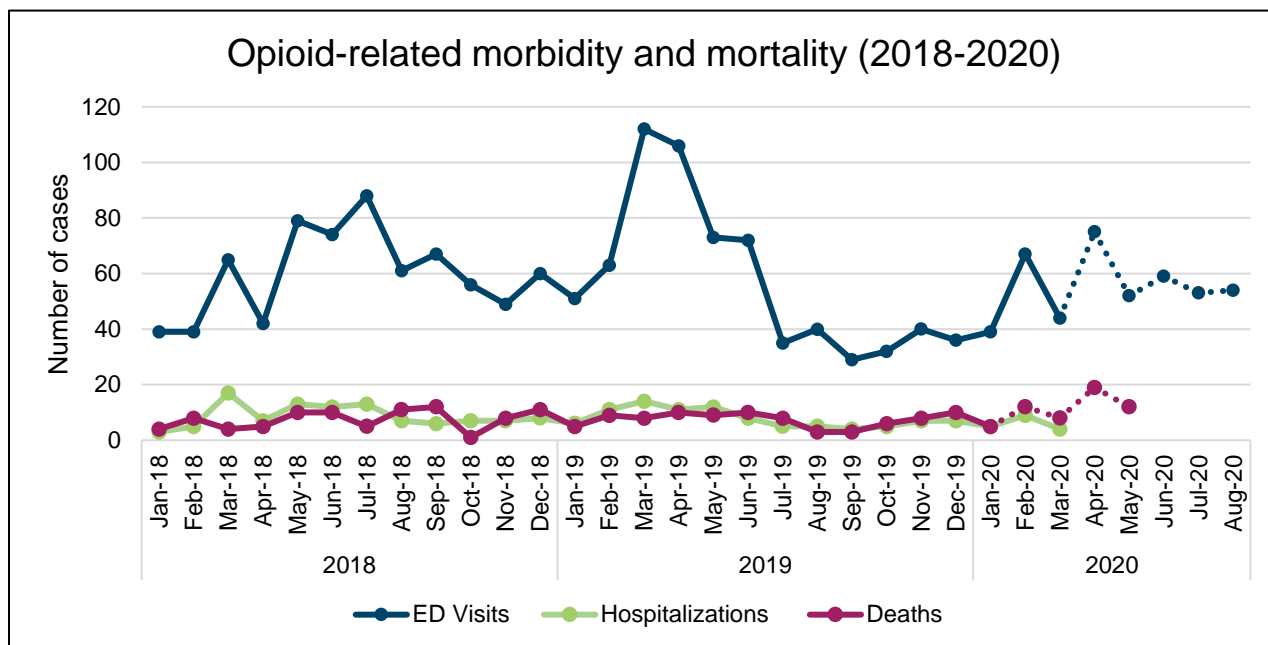
1. While finalized data have been lagging during the pandemic, we have continued to monitor EMS data and preliminary hospital and ED visit data. As noted previously, the data have shown that at best, there would be no improvements this year. However, the data are now clearly showing ongoing significantly worsening volumes for EMS calls, and an increasing trend in ED visits. Preliminary data show an increase in hospitalizations as well. It is very good that the public are calling EMS, and we need to continue to encourage this practice.
2. Deaths data are now available until May. We have complete data (trends and themes) for January through March, and have begun to analyze that. We anticipate receiving complete data for April through May imminently.
3. Naloxone distribution and use has also increased, which is critically important. **We encourage all persons to never use alone, and to make sure you have naloxone.**
4. OPENN updates: Four advisories have gone out this year. The Substance Use Prevention report is in the final stages. OPENN's prioritizations amongst the recommendations based on feasibility and anticipated impact are nearly done and workplan development, and sharing back with the community are the final steps.
5. NRPH is extremely grateful to the Ministry of Health and Public Health Ontario for their willingness to support our community. With them, we are striving to have quicker access to deaths data, support for assessment towards another SCS in Niagara, if the community is ready, and information to help OPENN with their safer supply workgroup efforts.
6. The website is updated as data becomes available. These updates are available through NRPH's site (in addition to elsewhere on the Region's site).  
[https://www.niagararegion.ca/living/health\\_wellness/alc-sub-abuse/drugs/overdose-prevention.aspx](https://www.niagararegion.ca/living/health_wellness/alc-sub-abuse/drugs/overdose-prevention.aspx)

7. For this report, we have included some **preliminary** data (in broken lines) in addition to the data found on the website. A summary of opioid-related population health outcome and naloxone distribution data available to date follows.



**Data source:** Niagara Emergency Medical Services, 2019-2020

- In 2019, there were 499 suspected opioid overdoses that were responded to by EMS. This was an average of 42 calls per month
- From January to August 2020, there were 400 suspected opioid overdoses that were responded to by EMS. This is an average of 50 calls per month
  - As of September 29, 2020, there have been 71 suspected opioid overdoses that were responded to by EMS this month. This is a record high for monthly calls.



**Data source:** National Ambulatory Care Reporting System, 2018-2020; Discharge Abstract Database, 2018-2020; Office of the Chief Coroner of Ontario, 2018-2020.

**Note:** ED visit data from April 2020 and onward is considered preliminary and should be interpreted with caution; Death data for 2020 is considered preliminary and should be interpreted with caution

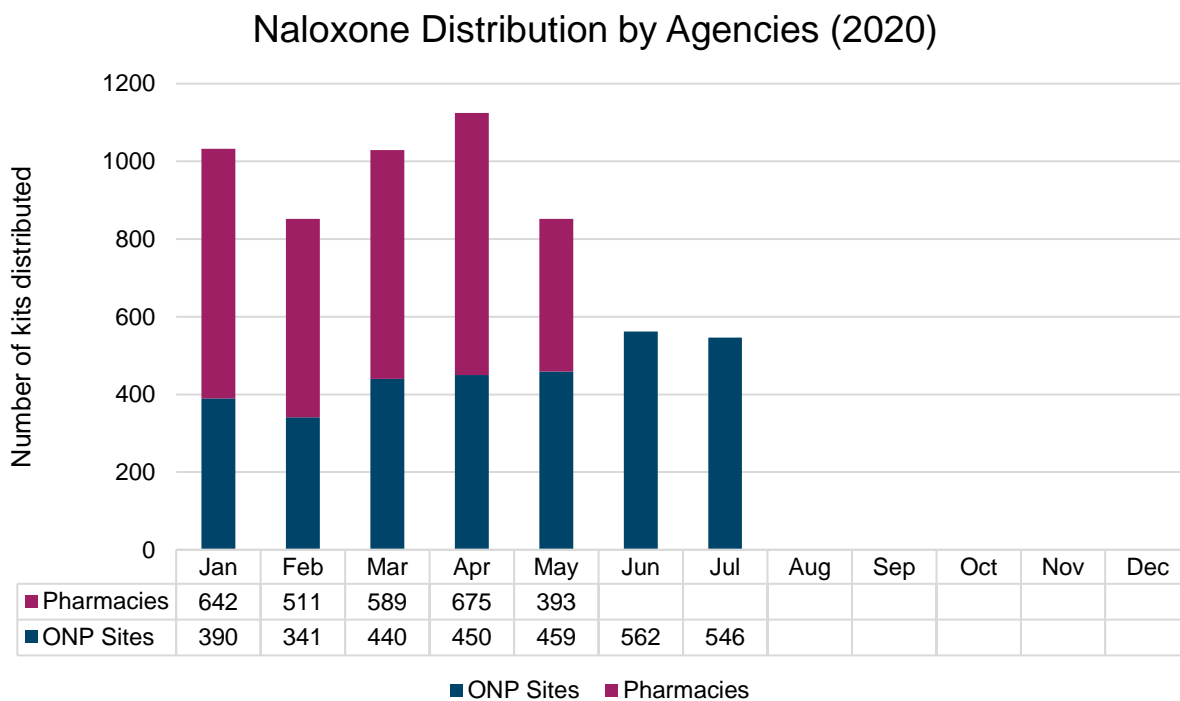
### Emergency Department Visits and Hospitalizations

- In 2018, there were a total of 719 opioid poisoning emergency department (ED) visits, and 105 hospitalizations. This was an average of 60 ED visits per month and 9 hospitalizations per month
- In 2019, there was a total of 689 opioid poisoning ED visits and 95 hospitalizations. This was an average of 57 ED visits per month and 8 hospitalizations per month
- From January to August 2020, there have been 456 opioid poisoning ED visits. This is an average of 57 ED visits per month
- From January to March 2020, there have been 18 hospitalizations. This is an average of 6 hospitalizations per month

### Deaths

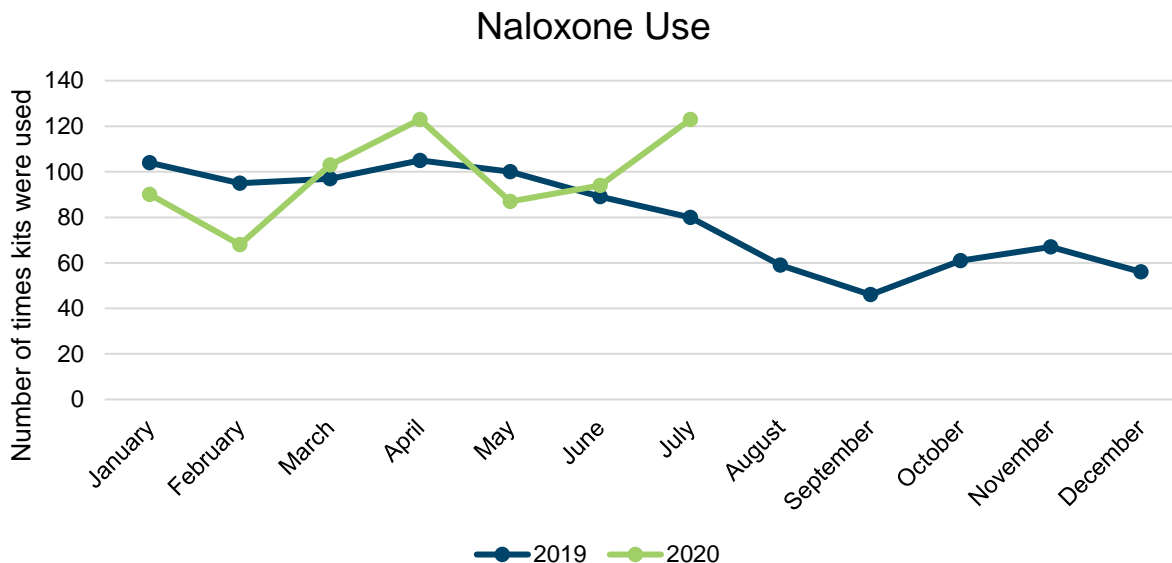
- In 2018, there were 89 opioid overdose deaths. This was an average of 7 deaths per month
  - Fentanyl was the most common type of opioid present at the time of death (present in 79% of deaths), followed by methadone (present in 18% of deaths)

- In 2019, there were 89 opioid overdose deaths. This was an average of 7 deaths per month
  - Fentanyl was the most common type of opioid present at the time of death (present in 52% of deaths), followed by carfentanil (present in 46% of deaths)
- From January to May 2020, there have been 56 opioid overdose deaths. This is an average of 11 deaths per month
  - January to March themes are consistent with previous years in terms of using while alone. Cocaine use was higher than in the past. Full information will be updated once second quarter analysis is available.



**Data source:** Niagara Region Public Health, 2020; Ministry of Health, 2020.

**Note:** Data for naloxone distribution from Canadian Addiction Treatment Centres is unavailable for 2020 while pharmacy data is only available up until the end of May 2020



**Data source:** Niagara Region Naloxone Distribution and Use [2019-2020].

- In 2019, there were over 13,500 naloxone kits distributed by pharmacies, Ontario Naloxone Program sites, and the Canadian Addiction Treatment Centres in Niagara.
  - Naloxone kits were reported to be used 959 times during this time
- From January to July 2020, there were over 6,000 naloxone kits distributed by pharmacies and Ontario Naloxone Program sites in Niagara (data are incomplete)
  - Naloxone kits were reported to be used 688 times during this time

We will continue to keep you updated. Other pertinent correspondence is listed below:

CWCD 429-2019

Respectfully submitted and signed by

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Associate Medical Officer of Health