Substance Use-Drug Overdose

New Mexico Department of Health, Epidemiology and Response Division

Santa Fe, New Mexico

Assignment Description

The fellow would join the Substance Use Epidemiology Section in the Injury and Behavioral Epidemiology Bureau of the NM Department of Health. The section currently has nine members with varied backgrounds and provides epidemiological support to the CDC-funded Overdose Data to Action (OD2A) initiative within the Bureau and to the Behavioral Health Services Division of the Human Services Department. The section works with a range of data sources, including mortality, morbidity (EMS, Emergency Department (ED), and Hospital Discharge), Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP), Surveys, and recently Department of Corrections release data. Section staff have extensive experience and skills that the fellow could draw on and learn from.

Day-to-Day Activities

The fellow would work closely with other members of the section and be included in section activities. Day-to-day activities would include:

- Data acquisition, cleaning and preparation
- Developing or modifying programs (mainly SAS) for data collection and analysis
- Linking data for individuals across selected data sets
- Data analysis and reporting
- Presentation of results, both internally and externally
- Participation in meetings at various levels on substance use topics
- Participation in appropriate CSTE subcommittees and workgroups

Potential Projects

Surveillance Activity       Drug Overdose Surveillance in Recently Released State Prisoners

The Department of Corrections (DoC) began reporting information on persons released from the prison system monthly in 2019. Reports include personal identifiers, where the person was released to, and an indicator of what type of release (supervised, etc). People released from prison are at high risk for overdose, particularly in the first month or two. Surveillance of services provided and adverse events in this population can provide a basis for improvements in programs and services.

Monthly reports from Department of Corrections on prisoners released would be matched to other data sets used in overdose surveillance including those from the New Mexico Office of the Medical Investigator (OMI), the PMP, and active ED surveillance, in particular. Data could also be matched to EMS and Hospital Discharge data for additional outcome information. Follow up on naloxone being distributed at prison release, and any other treatment services accessed or needed by the releasee.
It will be necessary to build/add to a tracking mechanism for the DoC reports of released persons; and match to PMP, OMI and ED active surveillance, as well as EMS, Syndromic Surveillance and Hospital Inpatient Discharge Data (HIDD) data. This will allow us to see if persons that are released from prison are leaving the prison system with naloxone and appropriate training, if they have received MAT or a referral for MAT, and to follow up on outcomes for this population.

**Surveillance Evaluation**  
Evaluation of surveillance data on persons released from prisons in NM.

As part of constructing a system to track data on persons released from prison, evaluate that system in terms of the formal definitions for surveillance systems and also in terms of its strengths and weaknesses in “moving the needle” on overdose in this population.

**Major Project**  
Geocoding and analysis of EMS drug overdose runs

Overdose events tend the cluster in time and space. Although New Mexico has not had the very large clusters that have occurred elsewhere, there is still a question of whether services are aligned geographically with overdose clusters. The general idea would be to geocode EMS runs to possible overdose events and analyze them for geographic clusters. Working with the mentors, the Fellow would:

1) Use geospatial models to identify where people are overdosing and which zones to target; then,
2) Assess whether prevention and treatment outreach efforts, including harm reduction, benefit from GIS analysis to locate areas with high rates of opioid use and overdose.

**Preparedness Role**

The Fellow will have the opportunity to participate in tabletop exercises related to preparedness and spend time in the Department Operations Center or the state Emergency Operations Center should they be activated during the fellowship period.

**Additional Activities**

The possibility exists for the Fellow to participate in an outbreak investigation with the Infectious Disease Bureau, or other ERD investigations as they come up.

**Mentors**

**Primary**  
Robert Kelly, PhD  
Substance Use Epidemiology Supervisor

**Secondary**  
James Davis, MA  
Opioid Overdose Epidemiologist