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## **Half of opioid overdoses in the Finger Lakes associated with a pain prescription**

*Livingston County residents went to the ED 67 times for opioids*

Every county in New York has been touched by the opioid epidemic. Livingston is no exception.

In 2016, Livingston County residents visited hospital emergency departments for opioid abuse or overdoses 67 times, and eight people died from the powerful pain killers, according to a [new study](#) of hospital admission and ED data from Common Ground Health.

The analysis also confirmed what anecdotal evidence has pointed to for years — that many residents struggling with addiction began their opioid dependence with a prescription from their doctor.

The report found that from 2014 to 2016, 54 percent of people who overdosed on opioids in the nine-county Finger Lakes region had a prescription for opioids within the prior two years. For non-heroin opioid overdoses, the relationship was even stronger; 68 percent of people who overdosed had prior prescriptions for painkillers.

“As opioid deaths and overdoses continue to devastate many in our region, it is critical that we better understand how individuals are becoming dependent,” said Albert Blankley, director of research and analytics for Common Ground Health. “These data show that for some individuals, prescription medications may contribute to or trigger the problem.”

Nationally, the CDC projects that drug overdose deaths have increased at least 21 percent from 2015 to 2016, with much of that increase driven by opioids. Yet in the Finger Lakes region, overdose deaths involving opioids soared 46 percent from 2015 to 2016. Alarming, heroin overdoses more than doubled from 2015 to 2016, with 613 overdoses across the region.

These statistics alone, however, understate the magnitude of the opioid crisis in the Finger Lakes region, the report noted. From 2005 to 2016, hospital visits related to opioid dependency or abuse increased 432 percent.

The issue brief also reported that:

- **African Americans had significantly lower rates of opioid related ED visits** than Whites or Hispanics, although all demographic groups experienced huge increases since 2010.
- **Opioid addiction crosses all ages.** Pain medication overdose in 2016 was highest among those 50 and older, while heroin overdose was most prevalent among 15- to 29-year olds in our region.
- **Addiction is both rural and urban.** The rate of opioid driven ED visits has grown in every county in the region, with the highest rates seen in Yates and Chemung.

To stem the epidemic, doctors are beginning to curb the amount of narcotics they prescribe, and local organizations are developing new approaches to the public health crisis. For example, new medication drop boxes are being added throughout the region, so residents can properly dispose of unused prescriptions. A list of drop boxes is available [here](#). Medication called Narcan/naloxone, which reverses opioid overdoses, is available without a prescription from pharmacies. Training for using Narcan/naloxone is available at [these locations](#).

Overdose and abuse statistics are based on data from the Statewide Planning and Research Cooperative System (SPARCS) and NYS Vital Statistics. Opioid prescription rates were analyzed using Common Ground Health's database of insurance claims.

Download the full issue brief at this link: <http://bit.ly/Opioid2018>

### **About Common Ground Health**

Founded in 1974, Common Ground Health is one of the nation's oldest and most effective regional health planning organizations. Located in Rochester's Neighborhood of the Arts, the nonprofit serves the nine-county Finger Lakes region. We bring together health care providers, insurers, consumers and other partners to find common ground on health challenges. Using the region's most comprehensive health data, together we hammer out strategies for better care, smarter spending and healthier people. Learn more about our community tables, our data resources and our work improving population health at [www.commongroundhealth.org](http://www.commongroundhealth.org).

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