

# Drug Monitoring: 2019 Health Trends™ Report

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# Health Trends™ Drug Misuse in America 2019

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## What is Health Trends?

### What makes the 2019 Report different from previous editions?

- Like previous editions, the 2019 Report presents findings from analysis of de-identified clinical drug monitoring tests by Quest Diagnostics
- Working in partnership with Center on Addiction, the 2019 report **also includes** findings of a **survey of 500 primary care physicians**, about their knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs regarding their **patient's usage of controlled substances**, including prescription medications and illicit drugs



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## New Insights from the 2019 Report:

- Many physicians are **struggling to treat chronic pain**, caught between a justified **reluctance to prescribe opioids** and a reasonable worry that the opioid epidemic will give way to **misuse of other prescription or illicit drugs**



62%

of physicians fear we will be trading the opioid crisis for another prescription drug crisis



72%

worry that chronic pain patients will turn to illicit drugs if they do not have access to prescription opioids



51%

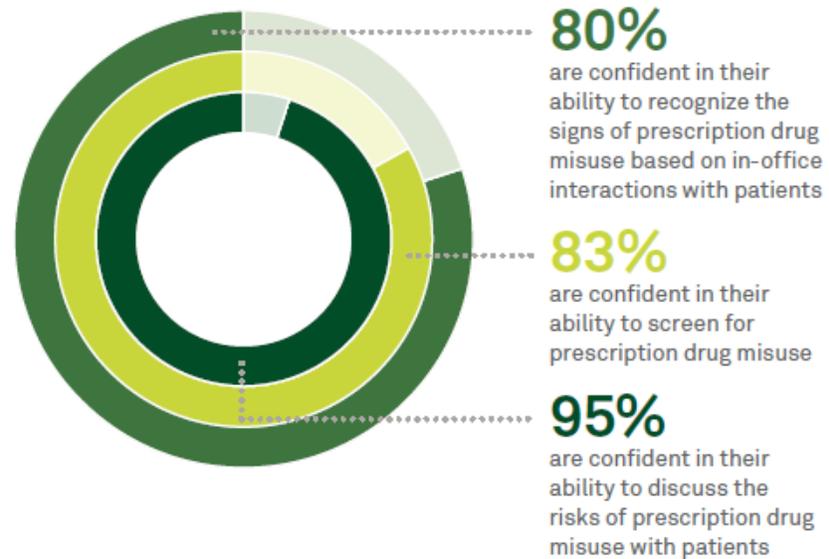
of patient test results from Quest Diagnostics show signs of misuse\*

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## Key Finding 1: Physicians may be overconfident in their ability to recognize prescription drug misuse

The majority of physicians feel confident in their ability to identify and discuss misuse



72% of physicians trust their patients to take their controlled substances as prescribed

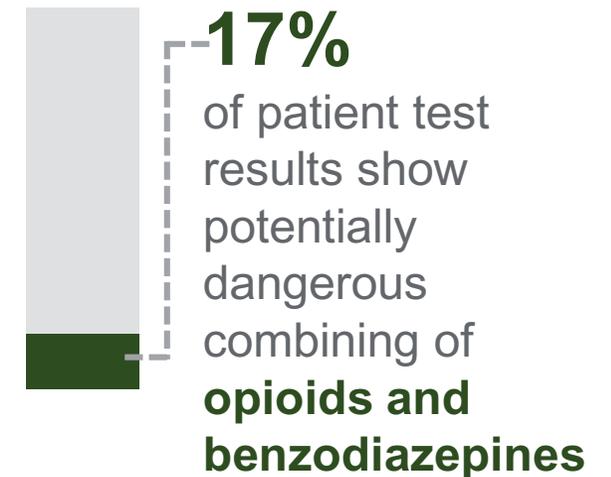
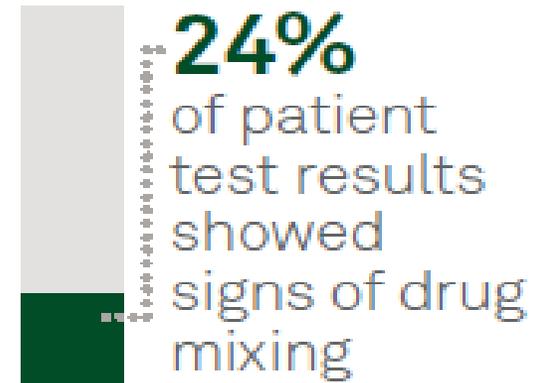
Yet, 51% more than half of patient test results from Quest Diagnostics show signs of misuse

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## Key Finding 2: Drug mixing, the most prevalent form of drug misuse, is underestimated by physicians

- Awareness of drug mixing is improving, as nearly half of physicians (**47%**) believe **>20% of patients misuse their controlled substances** through drug mixing
- Combining prescription medications with other drugs, including illicit drugs, other prescriptions, or alcohol remains **the most prevalent form of drug misuse observed in the laboratory data**

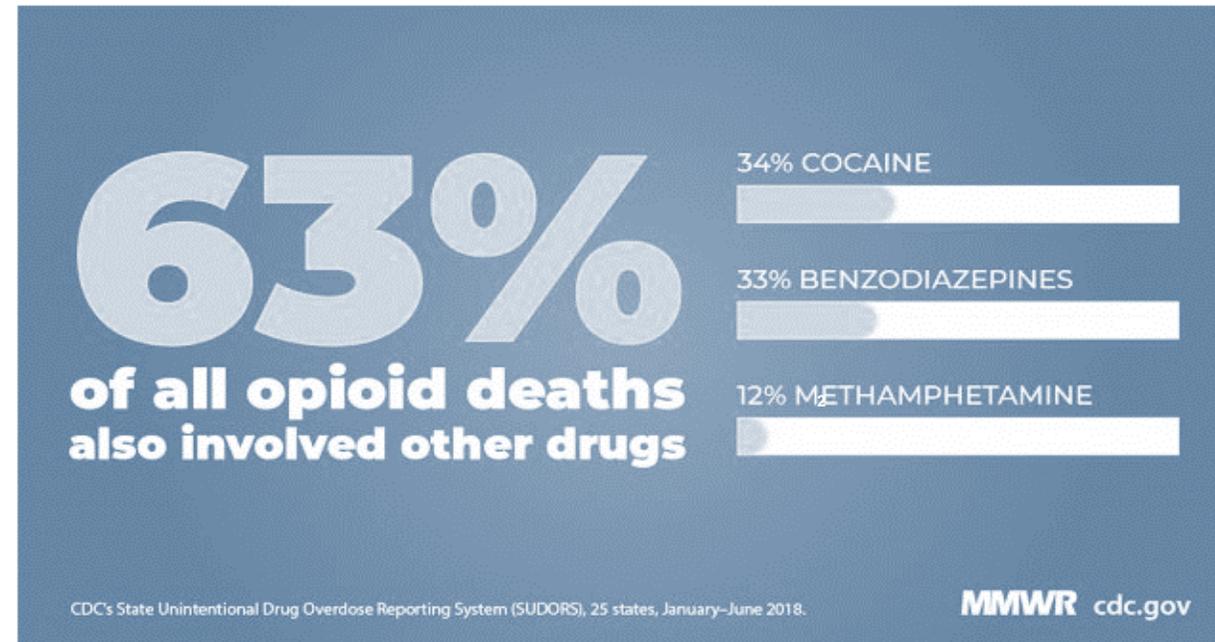


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## A closer look: Drug Mixing and the overdose death connection

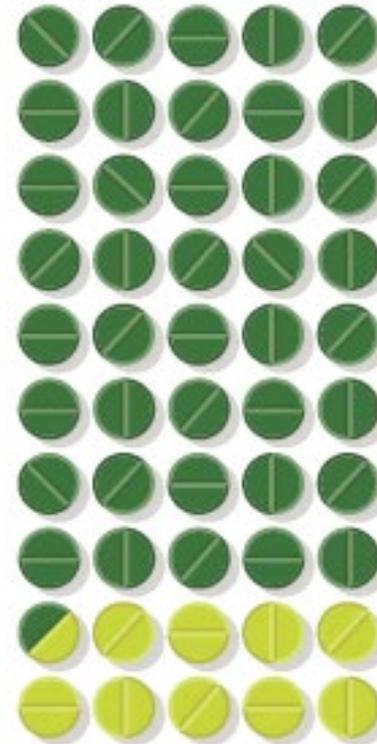
- **Mixing drugs can be a potentially lethal form of misuse**
  - According to a recent CDC review of overdose deaths:
    - **Benzodiazepines** were detected in **52%** of prescription opioid-only overdose deaths<sup>1</sup>
    - **Gabapentin** was detected in **22%** of prescription opioid-only overdose deaths<sup>1</sup>
  - The CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report from August 2019 showed 63% of all opioid deaths also involved other drugs<sup>2</sup>



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## Key Finding 3: Physicians are reluctant to take on patients prescribed opioids and challenged by chronic pain

- Physicians are confronted with the **challenges of responsibly treating chronic pain patients** in an environment of drug misuse, overdose deaths and prescribing regulations
- In light of the opioid epidemic, **72% of surveyed physicians worry that chronic pain patients may turn to illicit drugs (but they still don't welcome these patients!)**



**81%** are reluctant to take on patients who are currently prescribed opioids

**83%** agree that because of the opioid crisis, it is considerably harder now to treat patients suffering from chronic pain

**72%** say though we may see a decrease in opioid-related deaths, the trade-off is a greater number of patients whose pain is not properly managed

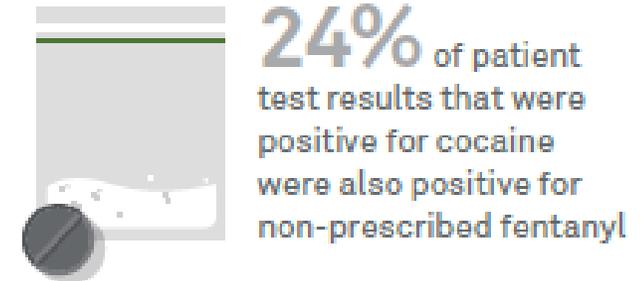
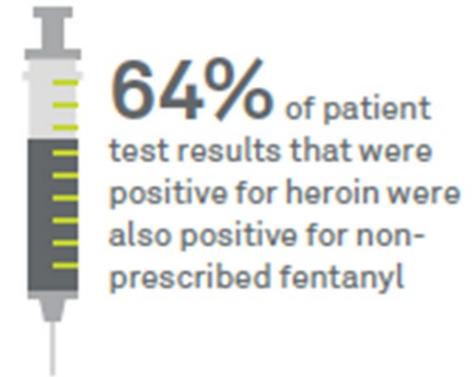
**62%** fear we will be trading the opioid crisis for another prescription drug crisis

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## A closer look: Fentanyl—a risk of illicit drug use

- Rates of **overdose deaths from synthetic opioids** now outpace those of prescribed opioids
  - **Overdose deaths involving fentanyl** and other synthetic opioids other than methadone **increased almost 47%** from 2016 to 2017<sup>3</sup>
- Fentanyl is often mixed with other illicit drugs— with or without the user’s knowledge. Quest Diagnostics data show **high rates of non-prescribed fentanyl found in individuals using heroin AND cocaine!**



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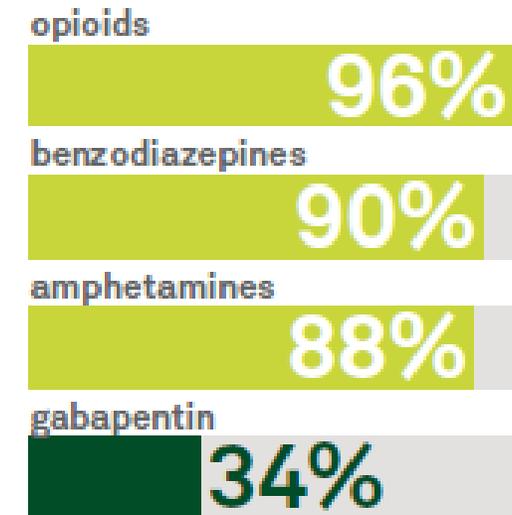
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## Key Finding 4: Gabapentin is emerging as an alternative pain therapy to opioids—just as misuse and illicit use increase

- **78%** of physicians say that in an effort to avoid prescribing opioids for the treatment of chronic pain, they often prescribe gabapentin to their patients with chronic pain
- **34%** are concerned about the potential misuse of gabapentin

◦ Quest Diagnostics laboratory data show that non-prescribed **gabapentin misuse rose 40%** in the latest year

### Percentage of physicians concerned about the potential misuse of:

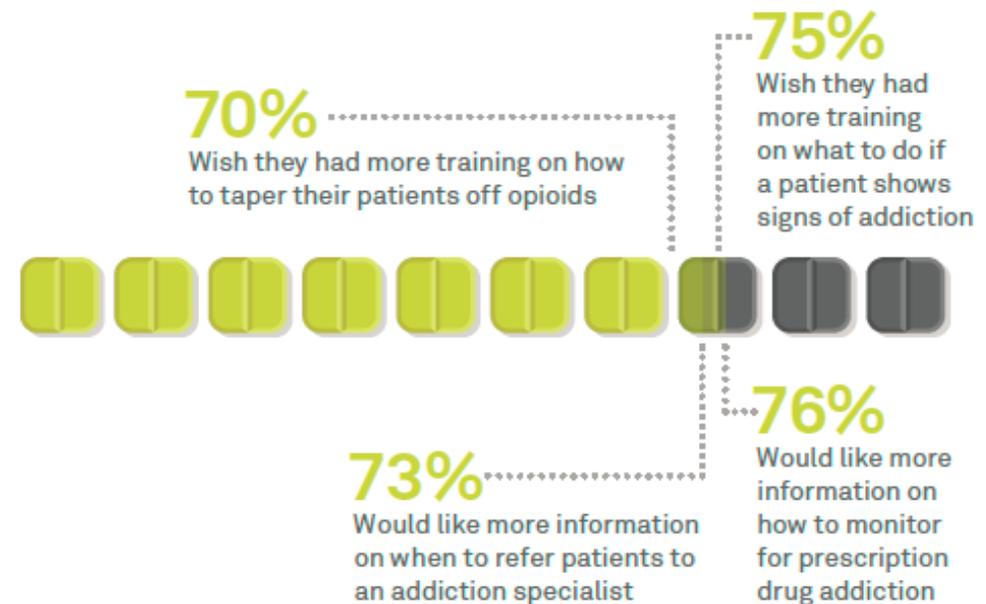


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## Key Finding 5: Physicians seek more education and see drug monitoring as part of the solution

- Physicians desire more education regarding substance use disorders
- **75% wish they had more training** on what to do if a patient shows signs of addiction
- **77% believe the stigma surrounding prescription drug addiction impairs patient care**

At least 7 out of 10 physicians state that they:

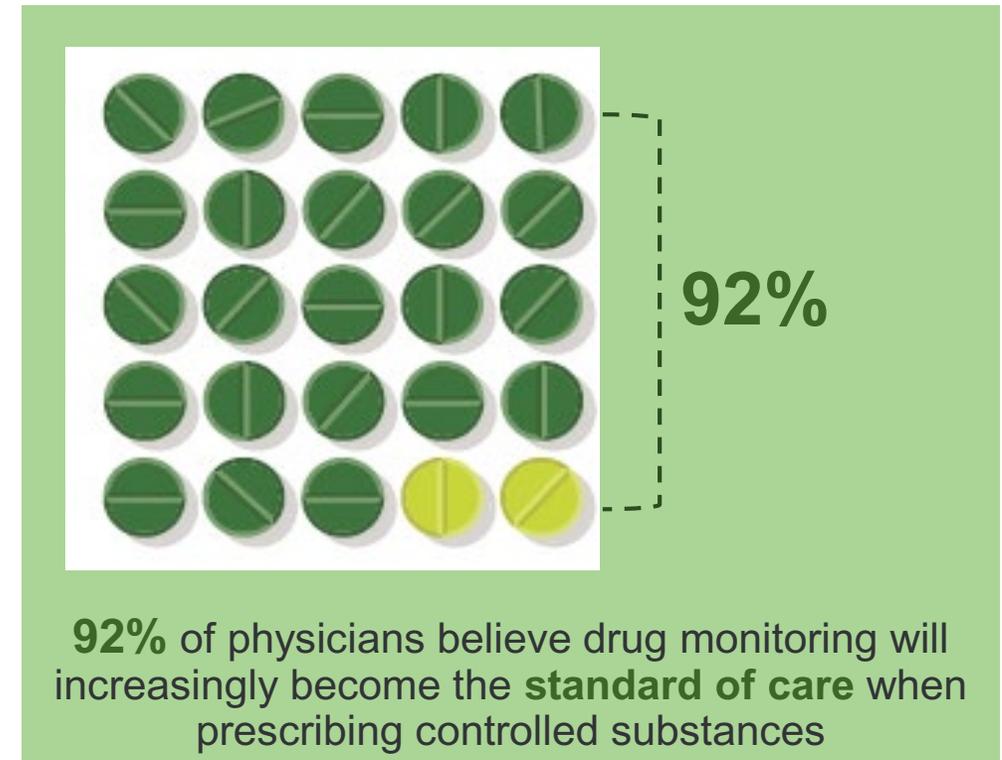


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But are they really doing this???

- **Physicians believe drug monitoring is a useful tool in preventing and identifying prescription drug misuse**
  - **90%** say it is important to use drug monitoring as a baseline prior to prescribing a controlled substance
  - **95%** say it is important to use drug monitoring while a patient is prescribed a controlled substance



# Health Trends™ Drug Misuse in America 2019: SUMMARY

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- Presents findings from analysis of more than 4.4 million de-identified drug monitoring tests performed by Quest Diagnostics from 2011 through 2018
- The report also incorporates findings from a survey conducted by The Harris Poll, commissioned by Quest Diagnostics and Center on Addiction, of 500 primary care physicians in the US
- Substance abuse and chronic pain are both increasing global socio-medical problems that affect every demographic
- The survey fielded with Quest Diagnostics and The Harris Poll found 77% of physicians felt that the stigma surrounding prescription drug addiction impairs patient care
- We need to empower healthcare practitioners to treat these patients