

Health Trends[®] 2021: Drug Misuse in America

*Physician perspectives and
diagnostic insights on the drug
crisis and COVID-19*

Dr Jeff Gudin: Sr Medical Advisor, Medical Affairs

Dr Jack Kain: Director, MSL, Medical Affairs

February 2022





Health Trends[®]

Drug Misuse in America 2021

Physician Perspectives and Diagnostic Insights
on the Drug Crisis and COVID-19

November 2021



The 2021 Quest Diagnostics Health Trends report examines the contributing factors to the increase in drug overdose deaths and whether health professionals face barriers in their ability to monitor and intervene with their patients at risk for drug misuse.

Our data includes:

- A survey of over 500 primary care physicians by The Harris Poll
- Drug testing results performed by Quest



Health Trends®

Drug Misuse in America 2021

Physician Perspectives and Diagnostic Insights
on the Drug Crisis and COVID-19

November 2021



Key findings summary

- Finding 1: Worsened drug crisis
- Finding 2: Missed signs
- Finding 3: Fear of fentanyl
- Finding 4: Confidence in counseling
- Finding 5: Clinical drug testing

Key Finding 1: The pandemic worsened the drug crisis.

Physicians anticipate a continuing rise in overdose deaths.

The US is facing a triple threat to public health:



COVID-19



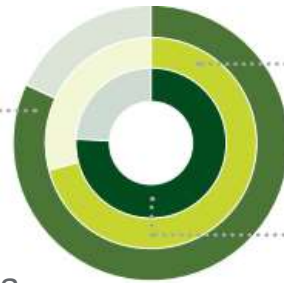
Declining mental health



Drug misuse

Physicians recognize that the pandemic and mental health crises have intensified the risk of drug misuse:

82%
Drug overdose deaths represent a national failure.



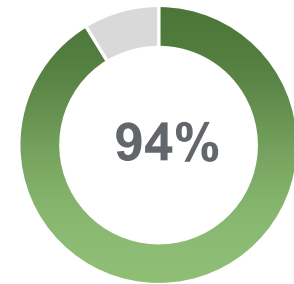
71%

Pandemic has made the drug crisis worse.

76%

Drug overdose deaths will rise as pandemic subsides.

Most primary care physicians (PCPs) report that more patients are experiencing stress, anxiety, or other mental health issues.



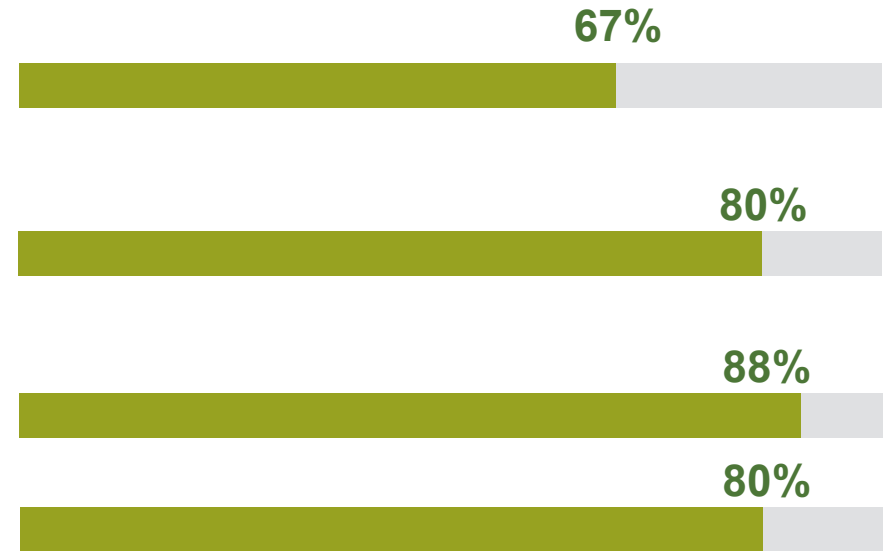
94%

Individuals identified as needing medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) might not have been able to readily access treatment since many physician offices closed during the pandemic.

Key Finding 2: Physicians worry that they have missed signs.

Drug misuse and use disorders signs missed during the pandemic

- **Sixty-seven percent of physicians** worry that they have missed signs of drug misuse and use disorders among their patients during the pandemic.
- **Eighty percent of physicians** worry that some patients at high risk for drug misuse or use disorders stopped seeing their doctors during the pandemic—potentially permanently.
- **Eighty-eight percent of physicians** believe that clinical drug testing is critical for preventing drug misuse.
- **Eighty percent of physicians** believe that the lack of drug testing during the pandemic put more people at risk for undetected drug misuse or use disorders.

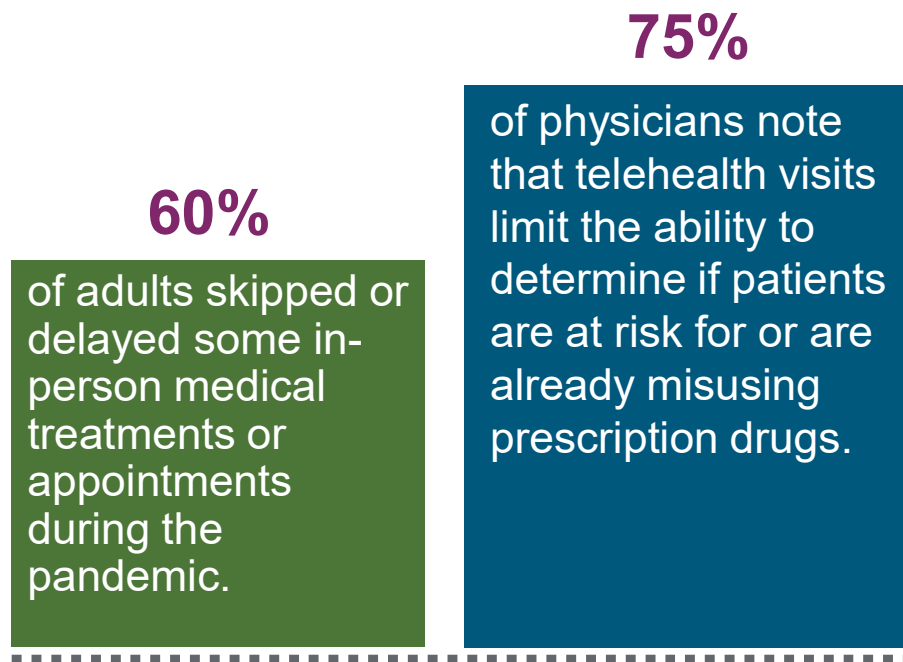


Quest experienced a 70% decline in clinical drug testing volume during the early stage of the pandemic.

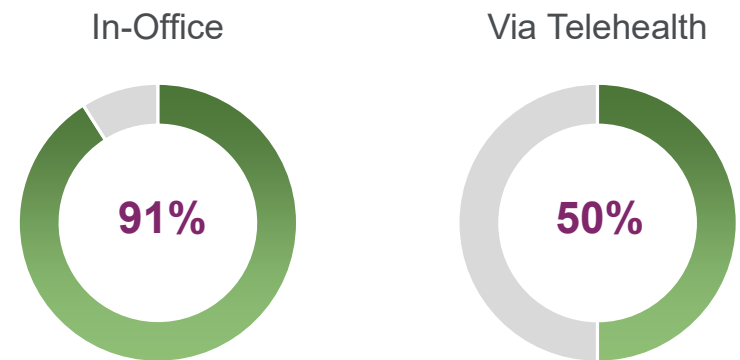


Key Finding 2: Physicians also express concerns about telehealth.

The pandemic spurred shifts in how, when, and where healthcare is delivered, causing concern that telehealth visits may have contributed to physicians' missing signs of misuse.



Physician **level of confidence** for recognizing signs of misuse **varies** based on type of interaction.



Key Finding 3: Physicians prescribe more gabapentin for chronic pain.

Current and future prescribing

Prescribing for chronic pain in the last 6 months:

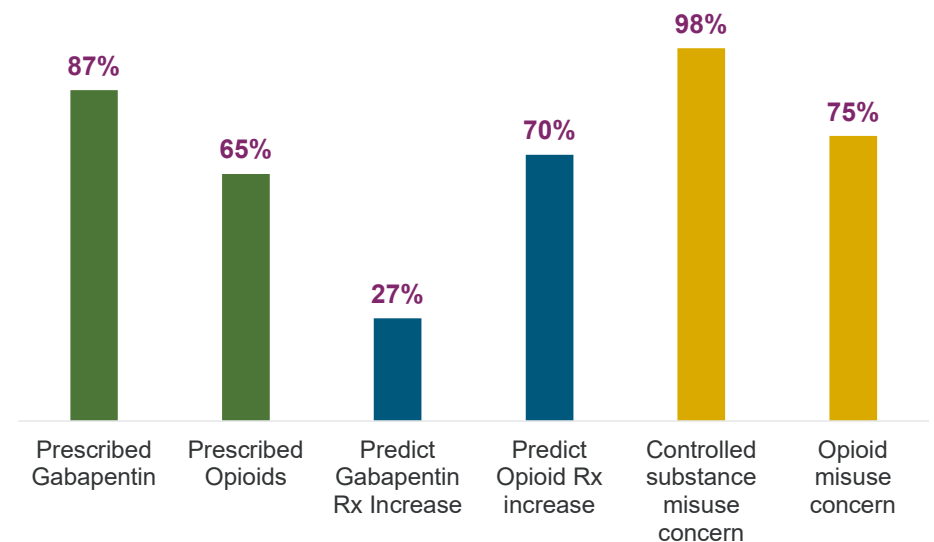
- Eighty-seven percent of physicians prescribed gabapentin
- Sixty-five percent of physicians prescribed opioids

Prescribing trends for chronic pain:

- Twenty-seven percent of physicians say gabapentin prescribing will increase
- Seventy percent of physicians say opioids prescribing will increase

Misuse concerns:

- Ninety-eight percent of physicians are concerned about controlled substances misuse
- Seventy-five percent of physicians are concerned about opioid misuse



Key Finding 3: Physicians also worry about illicit fentanyl.

Patients may turn to illicit fentanyl if unable to obtain prescription medication.

CDC Reports

- Overdose deaths rose **30%** in 2020.
- **Over 96,000** deaths occurred from March 2020 to March 2021.
- **More than 60%** of overdose deaths involved fentanyl.

Physician Insights

- **86% of physicians** worry that illicit fentanyl will claim more lives than prescription opioids.
- **78% of physicians** fear patients will turn to illicit fentanyl if unable to get a prescription medication.

Quest Data

- **35% increase** for non-prescribed fentanyl (from 4.3% prior to the pandemic to 5.8% during the pandemic)
- **44% increase** for heroin

“The pandemic has overturned gains that have been made in addressing the opioid epidemic. With a rising mental health crisis and more fentanyl in illicit drugs, we are truly facing a potential catastrophe.”

– Partnership to End Addiction

Key Finding 4: Physicians are confident in counseling patients.

Ninety-six percent of physicians are confident in their ability to discuss the risks of prescription drug misuse.



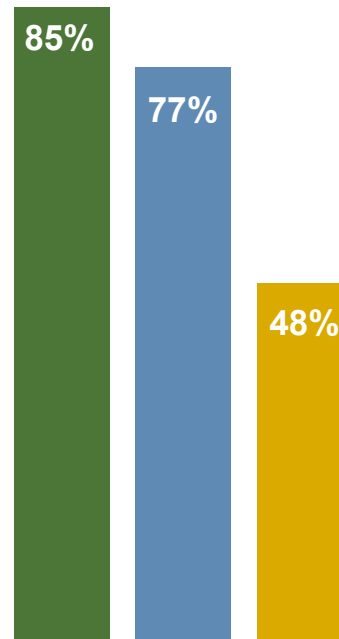
~9 in 10

Physicians are confident in their ability to address confirmed prescription drug misuse with patients.



88%

Physicians report feeling confident (19% very confident) that they can identify patients at risk for drug use and misuse.



- **85%** Physicians say drug testing gives them confidence in prescribing.
- **77%** Physicians say they don't always use drug monitoring tests.
- **48%** Patients tested show signs of drug misuse (half of these show dangerous drug combining).

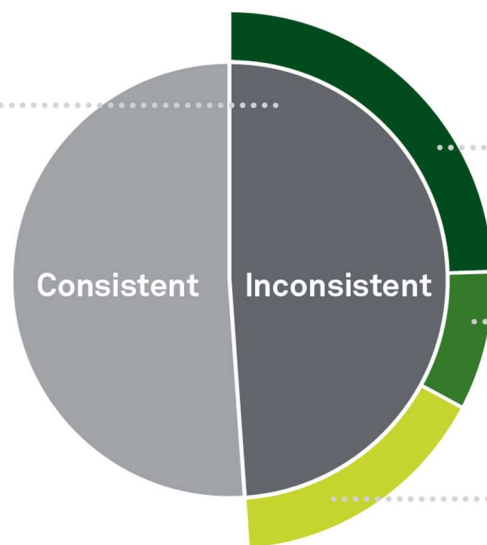
Key Finding 5: Clinical drug testing is considered critical by physicians.

Quest's data demonstrate the clinical utility of drug monitoring.

An analysis of de-identified laboratory test results performed by Quest Diagnostics on patients from all 50 states and the District of Columbia shows that nearly half of patients misuse their medications.

48%

Quest's drug monitoring tests showed signs of misuse.



Additional drugs are found

49% Combined prescribed drug(s) with at least 1 other nonprescribed substance.

Different drugs are found

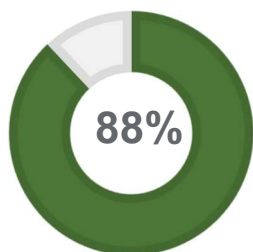
18% Did not show prescribed drug, but were positive for at least 1 other nonprescribed substance.

No drugs are found

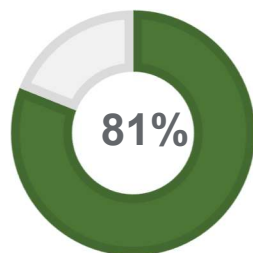
33% Did not show the prescribed drugs or any other tested drug.

Key Finding 5: Clinical drug testing is critical to prevent drug misuse.

Clinical drug testing is deemed standard of care:

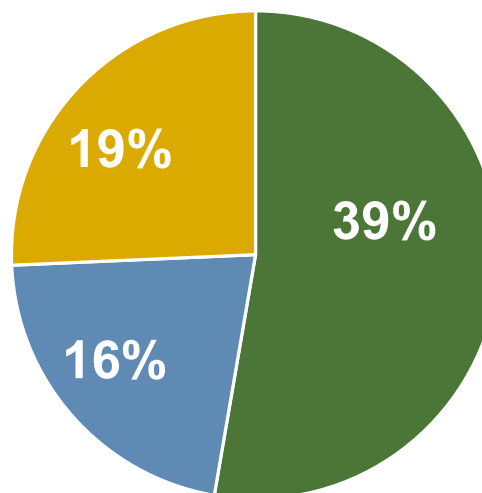


88% agree that clinical drug testing is critical to preventing drug misuse.



81% agree that clinical drug testing is critical to preventing overdose deaths.

Physicians commonly use a combination of presumptive and definitive tests:



39% order a presumptive test followed by a definitive test if the initial result is positive or inconclusive.

16% order only presumptive tests.

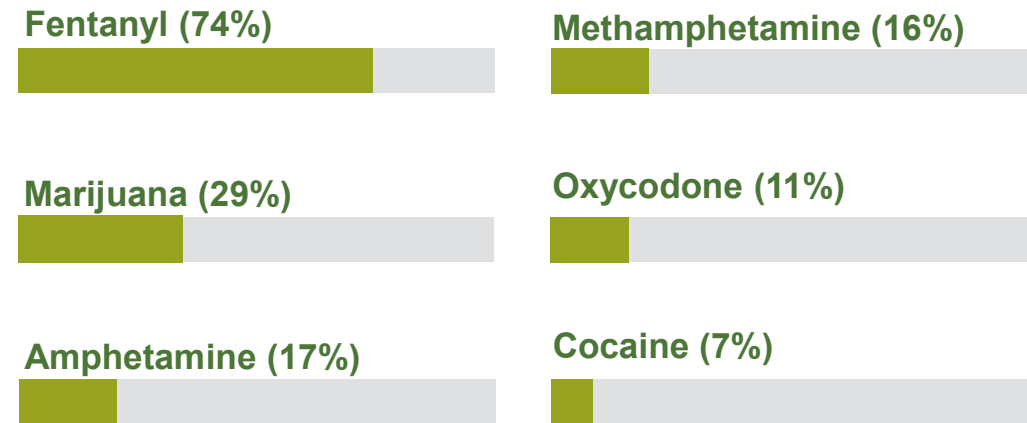
19% order definitive tests.

Key Finding 5: Clinical drug testing (continued)

Possible limitations with point of care, presumptive drug testing:

- Roughly half of all physicians who have prescribed controlled substances in the past 6 months do not order definitive testing for positive (51%) or inconclusive (47%) presumptive results.
- While definitive testing is not always required, these survey findings take on new urgency amid increased fentanyl-drug combining and limitations in identifying fentanyl, a major source of overdose deaths.
- Quest research shows that presumptive testing by point-of-care devices may miss true positive specimens (see graph).

If only presumptive tests at point of care are used, positive specimens may be missed for¹



Quest Diagnostics Health Trends®, January 2020– December 2020

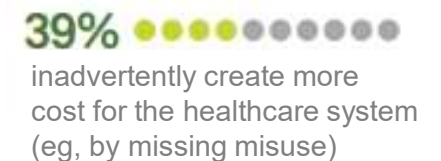
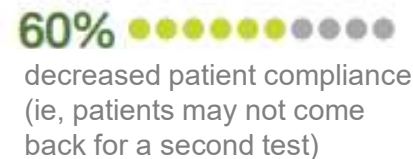
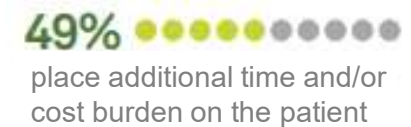
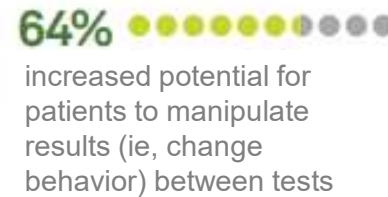
1. Niles JK, Gudín J, Radcliff J, Kaufman HW. The opioid epidemic within the COVID-19 pandemic: Drug testing in 2020. Population Health Management. 2021;24(S1). doi:10.1089/pop.2020.0230.

Key Finding 5: Clinical drug testing (continued)

Possible changes to reimbursement policy: presumptive and definitive drug testing samples may need to be collected on different days

- Best practice and FDA product labeling recommend testing on the same specimen to confirm a result.
- Using the same specimen for presumptive and definitive testing may reduce medical visits, travel time, and costs that may disproportionately impact low-income, elderly, and other disadvantaged groups.
- **Ninety-five percent** of physicians expressed concerns about the prospect of changes to reimbursement policy to require presumptive and definitive drug testing to be conducted on specimens collected on different days.
- **Fifty-nine percent** of physicians said they would not support such a policy shift.

Doctors have concerns if presumptive and definitive drug testing are performed on samples collected on different days.



Presumptive and definitive clinical drug testing

What's the difference?

Presumptive testing methods include rapid point-of-care (POC) devices as well as more sensitive laboratory immunoassays. While POC testing devices (eg, cups), provide rapid and inexpensive qualitative results, POC testing:

- Often has lower sensitivity and specificity, which may lead to false-negative and false-positive results
- May not be available for some commonly used and misused medications such as gabapentin, and emerging synthetic drugs
- Results are preliminary and may require definitive laboratory confirmation, as per FDA labeling and medical guidelines

Definitive testing uses highly complex laboratory instruments to identify and quantify prescription medications, illicit substances, and specific parent drugs and their metabolites often missed by POC testing

- Definitive testing is recommended for certain situations, such as for a positive presumptive test for a patient showing signs of misuse
- Definitive testing provides greater sensitivity, can confirm or refute presumptive test results, and reduces the occurrence of false-positive/false-negative results
- Definitive testing can take longer to produce a result and is typically more expensive than presumptive testing



Health Trends®

Drug Misuse in America 2021

Physician Perspectives and Diagnostic Insights
on the Drug Crisis and COVID-19

November 2021



Conclusions

- Research reveals the need for comprehensive resources to identify risk, combat drug misuse, and care for suffering patients.
- Clear and flexible guidelines are needed—harnessing medically appropriate drug testing, telehealth, home-based care, and other consumer-centric approaches—to improve delivery of the right care, at the right time, for the individual patient.
- As the world envisions a time beyond COVID-19, let us also look to a future free of drug overdose.