



Understanding Experiences of Families Affected by Opioid Misuse

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Images: Purchased (stock photos from Twenty20) for advertisements for recruitment in our Opioid research.

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The scope of the opioid epidemic is staggering. In 2017, overdose deaths in Michigan exceeded the number of traffic and gun deaths combined. While efforts have focused on understanding and helping individuals addicted to opioids, family members struggle with the unpredictability associated with addiction. Family members often play an important role in helping a loved one with opioid problems access treatment. This presentation describes results of a survey of adults in Michigan affected by a loved one's opioid misuse.

With assistance from state-funded treatment and prevention providers, participants were recruited to complete an online survey (N=299). Respondents included parents (41.5%), children (38.8%), siblings (34.4%), and spouses (12.8%) of individuals with opioid use disorders. A quarter (20.1%) had multiple families with opioid problems and 48.2% lost their loved one to an overdose or related problem. Findings from the survey highlight economic, emotional, and logistical challenges family members face when a loved one experiences opioid-related problems. Results suggest family members of individuals with opioid problems are a neglected but very motivated group that could be better utilized to help get individuals into treatment.

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