

1/18 BOH MTG: FENTANYL OPIOID RESPONSE UPDATE BY DR. BERRY

Dr. Berry's update conveyed a strong sense of urgency and commitment to addressing the opioid crisis, with a particular focus on the surge in fentanyl-related overdoses. Proposed exploring innovative strategies, like on-the-spot buprenorphine dosing, reflect a forward-thinking approach to public health and a dedication to community safety and well-being, emphasizing collaboration and broad community engagement.

Key Points (See accompanying slides - starting on page 2)

- **Rising Overdose Rates:** Dr. Berry highlighted the alarming increase in overdose rates in Jefferson County, with a particular emphasis on opioids and fentanyl, noting that rates have doubled since 2019. Jefferson County's overdose rates are above the state average, showing a concerning trend of divergence from statewide statistics.
- **Fentanyl's Dominant Impact:** The presentation underscored that nearly all opioid-related overdose deaths in the county are now due to fentanyl. Dr. Berry pointed out the deadly combination of fentanyl with stimulants like methamphetamine, which is particularly lethal due to its effect on oxygen demand and availability.
- **Broad Demographic Impact:** The demographic data presented countered the common belief that overdose victims are predominantly young, showing that the majority are actually in their 40s to 60s. This underscores the widespread impact of the opioid epidemic across various age groups.
- **Underlying Causes for Fentanyl Use:** Dr. Berry discussed the primary reasons for fentanyl use in the community, including to alleviate withdrawal symptoms, manage pain, or self-medicate for mental health issues, highlighting significant gaps in access to healthcare and mental health services.
- **EMS Challenges and Innovative Strategies:** The increasing burden on EMS due to repeat overdose incidents was addressed. Dr. Berry introduced innovative strategies like on-the-spot buprenorphine dosing for overdose patients, aimed at breaking the cycle of overdose by providing immediate treatment for opioid use disorder. This approach is part of a pilot program in neighboring Clallam County, with hopes for implementation in Jefferson County. The strategy involves EMS administering buprenorphine immediately after naloxone revival to mitigate withdrawal symptoms and potentially engage individuals in treatment.

Questions & Answers

- **Correlation with the Blake Decision:** Greg Brotherton inquired about the correlation between the Blake decision and increased overdoses. Dr. Berry explained that similar trends are seen in

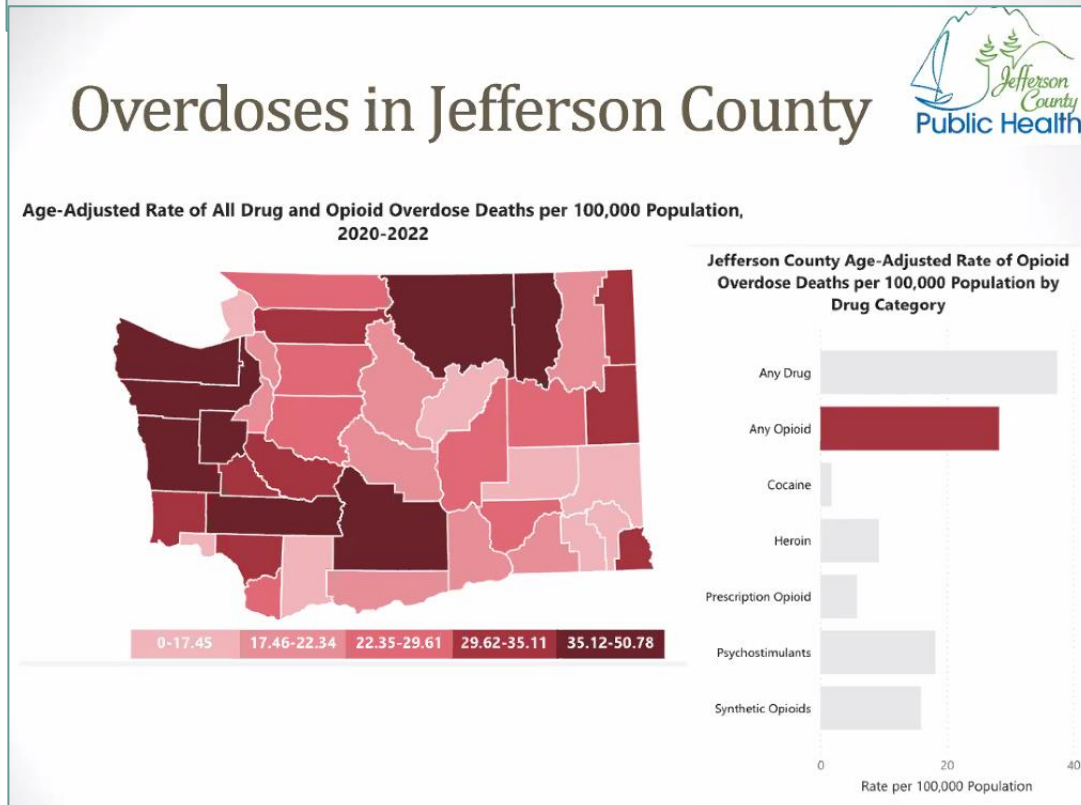
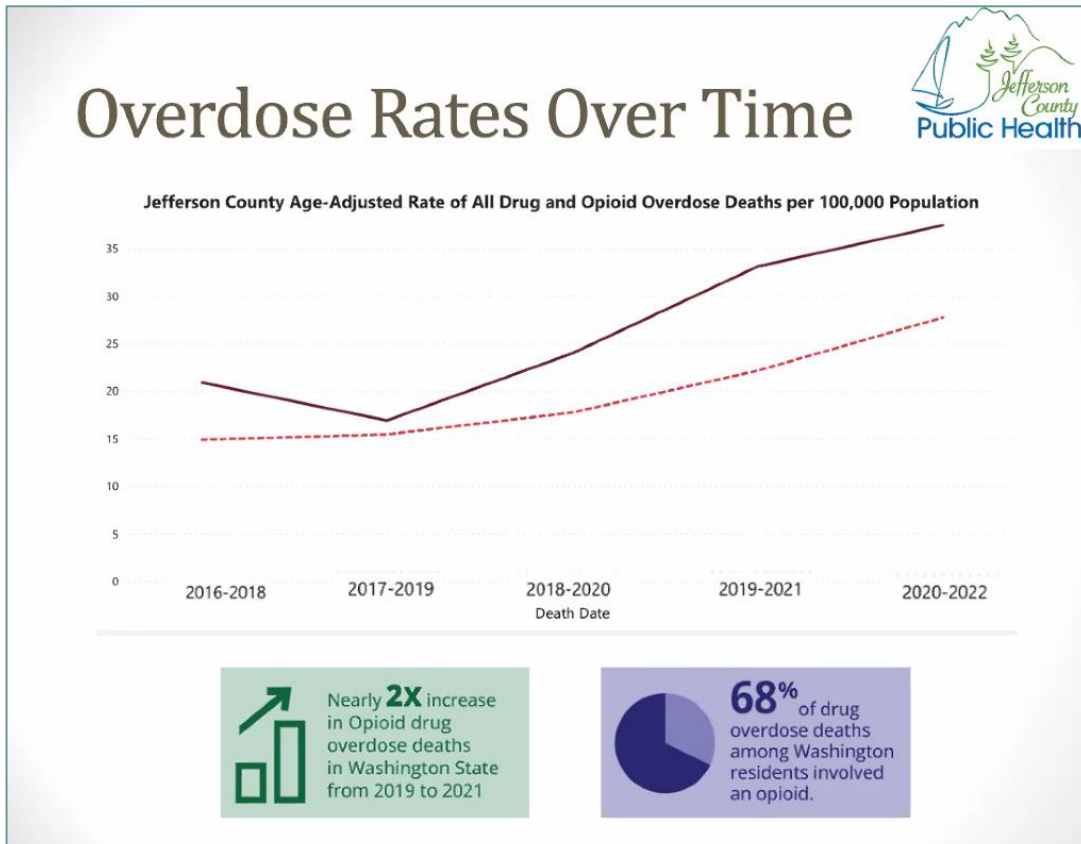
areas not affected by the decision, suggesting that factors like the pandemic, housing crisis, and the introduction of fentanyl are more significant contributors.

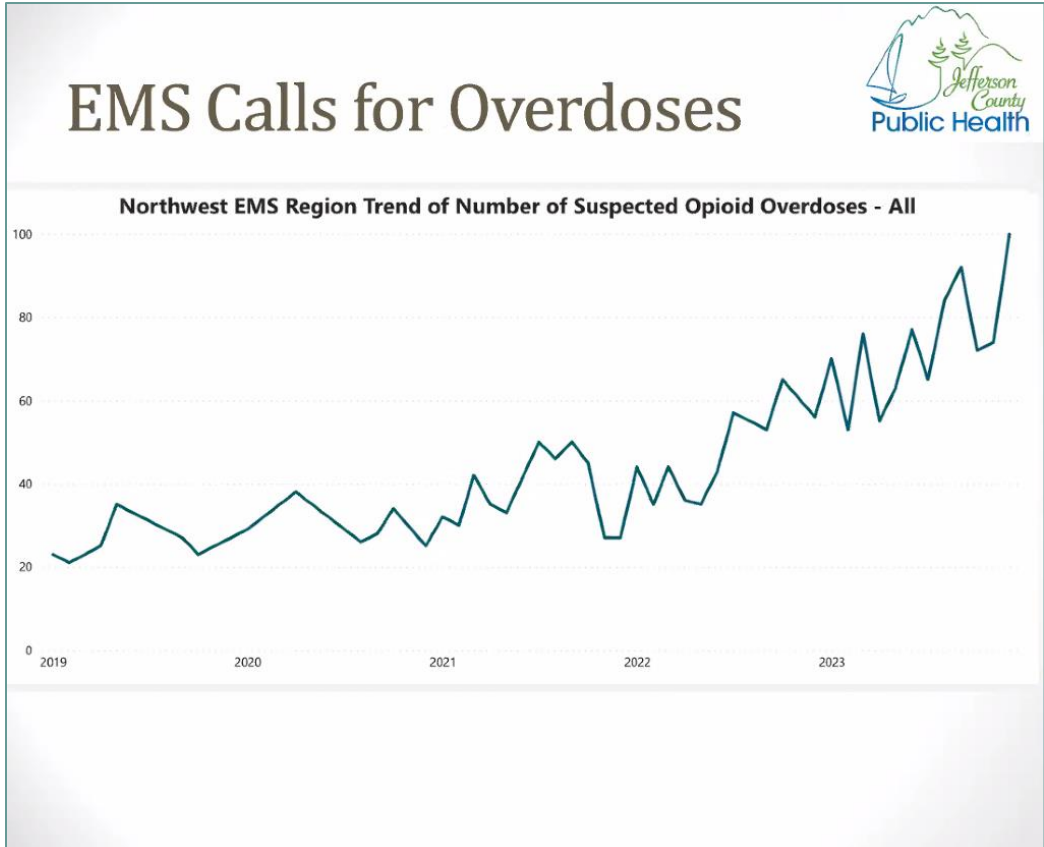
- **Comparing Public Health Responses:** Kate Dean asked about the contrasting approaches to fentanyl compared to other public health crises like smoking or HIV. Dr. Berry highlighted the application of similar principles of engagement and harm reduction across these issues, despite differences in legal and societal perceptions.
- **Effectiveness of On-The-Spot Buprenorphine:** Apple Martine questioned the effectiveness of buprenorphine, especially when fentanyl is mixed with other substances. Dr. Berry clarified that buprenorphine, as a partial opiate agonist, can mitigate withdrawal symptoms and reduce the likelihood of subsequent overdoses by binding strongly to opiate receptors, preventing other opiates from having an effect.
- **Comparison of Public Health Responses:** Kate Dean queried about the contrasting public health responses to fentanyl, smoking, and HIV. Dr. Berry discussed the application of similar engagement and harm reduction principles across these health issues, despite differences in legal and societal contexts.

Action Items:

- **Explore and Implement Novel Interventions:** Dr. Berry advocated for the continuation and evaluation of innovative approaches like on-the-spot buprenorphine administration by EMS post-overdose, as part of a broader strategy to address the opioid crisis and reduce the burden on emergency services.
- **Improve Access to Treatment and Address Stigma:** There's an identified need to enhance accessibility to substance use disorder treatments and challenge the stigma associated with these conditions, encouraging a more significant number of individuals to seek assistance.

Slides from Dr. Berry's Presentation





Overdose Response

- Treatment
 - Increased access
 - Evidence-based models
 - No wrong door
- Prevention
 - Youth prevention
 - Preventing upstream drivers
- Harm Reduction
 - Novel engagement strategies

