

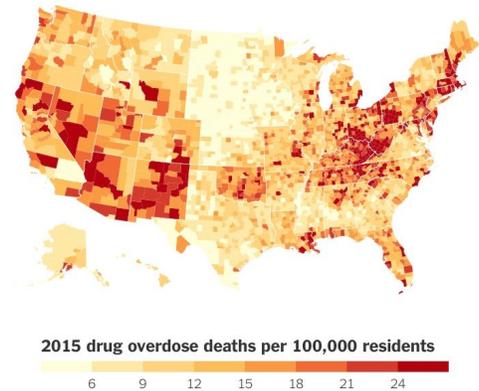


THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY
 YOUTH GOVERNOR WILLIAM HUANG
COMMISSIONER OF HEALTH:
EMMA DIDZBALIS



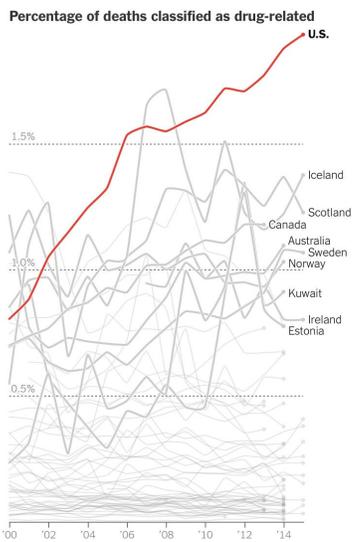
Dear Delegates,

The New Jersey opioid epidemic has led to the death of an estimated 5,000 residents in the past decade. Our state is facing a crisis regarding the abuse of opioids by citizens of all classes, races, and socioeconomic statuses. In 2015, New Jersey experienced 1,587 drug overdose deaths, many attributed to opioid addiction; furthermore, more people died in New Jersey in 2016 from drug overdoses than from guns, car accidents and suicides combined. This opioid crisis stems from the problems of limited treatment for chronic pain and overprescription of these addictive substances.



In counties with fewer than 20 drug overdose deaths, the map combines observed totals with modeled estimates.

Source: National Center for Health Statistics, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



The chart includes both deaths from drug poisoning and those caused by drug-related mental disorders.

Chronic pain affects approximately 100 million Americans today and potentially 8 million of those affected use opioids at a longterm treatment method. Although some alternative methods of pain management are available across New Jersey, current clinical research on new

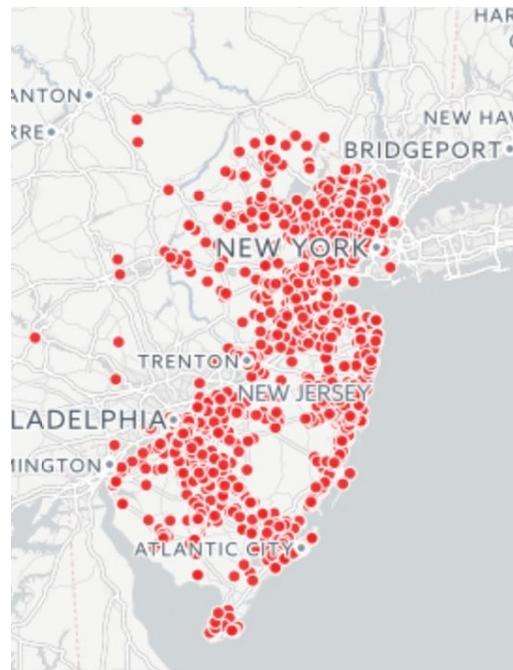
chronic pain treatments have not made an impact on the fight against widespread opioid addiction. Given the great advances in medical sciences every year, the notion that New Jersey cannot develop less addictive and equally effective methods of treating patients is shocking. As with many other aspects of the medical field, a lack of research leads to a continuation of this growing problem. The second major factor that contributes to New Jersey's opioid addiction epidemic is the over prescription of these substances. In recent years, the prescription of opioid drugs has grown exponentially and the number of opioid prescriptions annually has increased by millions. Doctors must often decide

between letting their patients suffer or feeding into the addictive cycle. Patients are oftentimes unaware

how how addictive these substances can be and often develop an opioid dependence problem after accidents, surgeries, and illness.

Another aspect of the opioid epidemic that may require regulation is the treatment of opioid overdoses. The most effective and common treatment for opioid overdoses is Naloxone. This drug effectively reverses the effects of opioids and can return a person in respiratory arrest to a normal state in 30 minutes. This drug is carried by emergency medical technicians across the state of New Jersey. It can also be purchased in rescue kits for those who reside with people at high risk of opioid overdose. Some New Jersey high schools are choosing to keep Naloxone in their nurses offices due to the increased incidents of overdoses around or during school hours. The opioid overdoses and their treatment has worked its way into nearly every area of New Jersey citizens' lives.

The solution to America's opioid epidemic and its influence on New Jersey may not be a one-step resolution. However, I am excited to see what proposals you can come up with to help solve the many facets of New Jersey's opioid epidemic.



Opioid Related Deaths in 2016

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emma Didzbalis". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Emma Didzbalis
Commissioner of Health

Sources:

Opioid Abuse in NJ:

<http://www.drugfreenj.org/news/mycentraljerseycom-opioid-abuse-everyones-backyard/>

Treating Chronic Pain in America:

<http://time.com/3663907/treating-pain-opioids-painkillers/>

America's Opioid Crisis:

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/08/03/upshot/opioid-drug-overdose-epidemic.html>

Naloxone:

<http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dmhas/initiatives/naloxone.html>

<http://nj.gov/health/integratedhealth/services-treatment/naloxone.shtml>

The Opioid Epidemic and Schools:

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/mobile.nytimes.com/2017/03/29/nyregion/in-naloxone-heroin-schools-ro-om-overdose-antidote.amp.html>