

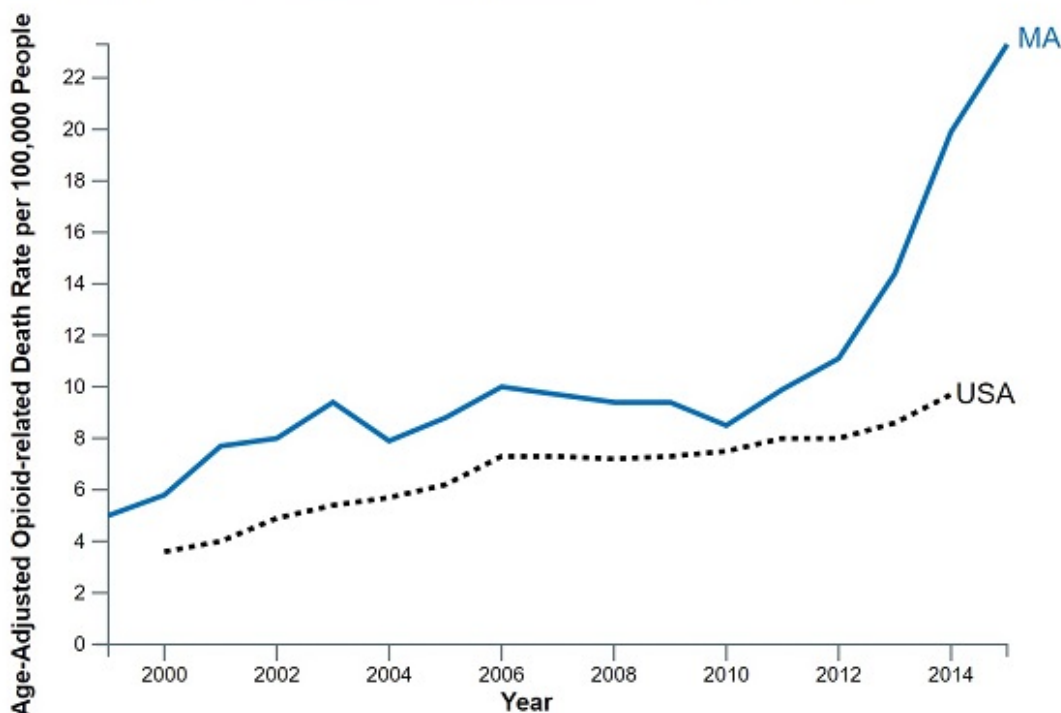
Narcan, stabilize, release and repeat – Massachusetts solution to the opioid epidemic

Over 50,000 people died from heroin overdoses last year – a 23% increase in one year and cause of more deaths than guns (36,252) or car accidents (37,757). At this rate, heroin deaths will kill more people than cars and guns in three years.

When it comes to heroin deaths, Massachusetts is leading the way. The state with the best education seems to be excelling at heroin overdoses. According to Mass.gov, 2014 marked the first year that the fatal overdose rate in Massachusetts was more than **double** the national average.

Age-Adjusted Opioid-related Death Rate by Year^{4,7,8}

Comparing the opioid-related death rate of Massachusetts to the nation overall.



Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Multiple Cause of Death 1999-2014 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released 2015. Massachusetts Registry of Vital Records and Statistics, Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

Why does Massachusetts fail so miserably when it comes to preventing heroin deaths? There is no one answer, but one can look at the legislators lack of willingness to be tough on the problem and not making it a priority. It is nearly impossible to Section someone (force them into treatment) who is abusing heroin. Police, fire, EMS and hospital personnel really have no power to hold a person that has overdosed unless they are in the emergency room. Even then, the lack of beds seems to be a major issue.

Earlier this week, a 47-year old New Bedford woman overdosed on heroin twice in a 24-hour period. Narcan, stabilize, release and repeat. Finding addicts that have overdosed multiple times is becoming commonplace in Massachusetts, but Narcan seems to just be making the road to death a little longer.

Here's a recent example of a man in a homeless encampment overdosing, getting revived and then running away from EMS and fire personnel.

In mid-March of 2016, Governor Baker signed the "Opioid Bill" to help fight the opioid title wave hammering Massachusetts, but legislators diluted most of Baker's initiatives that could have made a difference. One key provision that was removed was the ability to detain an addict for 3 days.

According to the Boston Globe:

Baker had originally proposed allowing hospitals to hold addicts who pose a danger to themselves or others against

their will for three days, evaluate them, and decide whether to seek legal permission for longer commitments.

The idea was to divert people who might leave the hospital and immediately start using drugs again and allow them to break the cycle of addiction. But the Legislature balked at the provision, instead putting forward the more modest emergency room substance-abuse evaluation requirement that is now law.

Baker's idea was aggressive and aggressive action is what we need, but the legislators that led Massachusetts into a heroin epidemic that is killing twice as many people as the national average derailed Baker's plan.

Our state is leading the nation in heroin overdoses because our legislators feel it's your freedom to kill yourself and it would be too costly to house so many addicts. We only have a record number of addicts and strained resources because of the lack of leadership over the past few decades. Imagine the cost in money and lives if this crisis continues to grow for another decade?

We have amazing police, fire and medical professionals locally and statewide that are saving lives every day, but they are really only there to "Narcan, stabilize and release" while our dealers and legislators help with the repeat.

Don't agree? Then how do you explain Massachusetts having twice as many heroin overdose deaths as the national average? Post a comment!