

Vakkalanka JP, Kingsbury E, King JD, Holstege CP. Utilization of Uniform Crime Reports and Poison Center Data to Identify Patterns in Substance Abuse. International Congress of the European Association of Poisons Centres and Clinical Toxicologists. 2015, St. Julian's, Malta.

Objective: The purpose of this study was to compare trends in drug arrests as reported through the state Uniform Crime Reporting Program and drug exposures from a Poison Center Network.

Methods: Data were extracted from the annual state crime reports to reflect all drug arrests from calendar years 2008 through 2012. The data were tabulated by type of drug, and by age group (10-17, 18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, >=55 years). Select drug exposures (amphetamine/methamphetamine, cocaine, heroin, LSD, marijuana, phencyclidine (PCP), THC homologs, and other/unknown street drugs) from a state Poison Center Network annual reports were extracted for calendar years 2009 through 2012. Changes in annual arrests and exposures were evaluated by linear regression.

Results: There was an annual average of 34,747 arrests due to drugs in the state between 2008 and 2012, with an annual increase of 1,408 arrests per year. On average, marijuana accounted for approximately 62% of arrests and was predominantly responsible for the overall increase in rates of drug arrests with 1,031 additional arrests per year. Other drugs frequently resulting in drug arrests included cocaine (n=24,505; 14.1%), other/unknown drugs (n=23,633; 13.6%), and other narcotics (n=7,826; 4.5%). Amphetamines/methamphetamines and other/unknown drugs increased by 101 and 398 arrests, respectively, per year. Arrests due to cocaine, however, appeared to decrease with 458 fewer arrests per year. Drug arrests varied by age group, whereby over half of marijuana arrests (52%) were among adults 18-24 years of age. Those 25-34 years old accounted for the majority of arrests due to amphetamines/methamphetamines, cocaine, heroin, other narcotics, and PCP. When compared with state poison center data, similar annual increases were seen for amphetamine/ methamphetamine exposures (64 more exposures per year). Cocaine exposures decreased by 16 cases per year, while heroin and PCP appeared to be stable during this time frame.

Conclusion: Limitations to this study included variable practices in categorization of drugs between law enforcement and poison center for select substances. This study highlights how data from unique sources such as those from the state police and poison centers may be merged to identify the public health burden of a problem (e.g. substance abuse) in a community. Reviewing drug arrest data allows poison centers to prepare for the changing trends and prevalence of substances, and may also drive collaborative efforts between law enforcement and poison center personnel.