Racial Disparities in Prescribing of Medicaid SSI Recipients

Proposal: Retirement and Disability Research Center

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Since 1999 drug-involved overdose deaths in the United States have increased from less than 20,000 to over 100,000 annually in 2021 (CDC, 2023). In the most recent reporting year, nearly 80% of drug-involved overdose deaths involved an opioid. Numerous studies have documented the link between opioid prescribing and adverse outcomes like opioid use disorder and opioid overdose death (Bohnert et al., 2011; Kolodny et al., 2015; Boscarino et al., 2016). This project proposes utilizing Medicaid data from 2016 to 2019 to assess the racial and ethnic differences in opioid prescribing among Medicaid SSI recipients. In addition to the number of prescriptions, I will explore the length of days prescribed, morphine milligram equivalent, and overlapping prescriptions. Once a baseline of racial and ethnic differences among SSI prescription history has been established, the project aims to explore further the role overlapping prescriptions may play in adverse health outcomes. The population of Medicaid SSI recipients will be compared to non-SSI Medicaid recipients and compared to OUD and overdose rates at the county and state level to better investigate the role Medicaid prescriptions may have played a mitigating role in rate of OUD adverse effects. Additionally, this project will help to inform prior research by co-authors and myself on opioid use disorders and admissions to treatment facilities. Once the analysis is done to understand better racial and ethnic differences in opioid prescribing of Medicaid SSI recipients, a similar analysis will be extended to explore a subset of mental health treatments.