

Researcher examines drug overdose mortality in the Hispanic community

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UTSA researcher Manuel Cano, assistant professor in the Department of Social Work in the UTSA College for Health, Community and Policy is shedding light to understand the topic of drug overdose deaths in the Hispanic community.

In the article "Drug Overdose Deaths Among US Hispanics: Trends (2000-2017) and Recent Patterns" published in "*Substance Use & Misuse*" Cano used national death certificate data (data recording all deaths of U.S. residents) to examine [drug overdose](#) mortality in different Hispanic subgroups, based on heritage, place of birth and gender.

Cano explains, "In the context of the current opioid crisis, drug overdose in the media is often presented as a problem affecting white individuals. However, this tragedy affects all racial/[ethnic groups](#) and no racial/ethnic group should be overlooked or left behind in the national response. Opioids are killing a lot of people but so are other drugs affecting different groups. There is substantial variation considering race and ethnicity," Cano said.

The national data on drug overdose mortality shows lower rates of drug overdose deaths in Hispanics compared to Non-Hispanic Whites or Blacks. However, the study revealed people of Puerto Rican heritage have a higher rate of drug overdose mortality compared to Non-Hispanic Whites or Blacks.

Among those of Puerto Rican heritage, those born in Puerto Rico—many of whom may speak Spanish as a first language- were overrepresented in drug overdose deaths, suggesting that culturally-tailored and accessible services in Spanish are necessary for this group. In contrast, the majority of individuals of Mexican-heritage who died of [drug](#) overdose were born in the U.S.

"The more we understand which subgroups are most affected, the more we can provide culturally-appropriate services that better address their needs. Drug overdose is preventable," Cano added.

Cano concluded, "Hispanic cultures have many rich cultural values and strengths that can be protective factors against overdose, for example, the value of the family and respect."

More information: Manuel Cano, Drug Overdose Deaths Among US Hispanics: Trends (2000–2017) and Recent Patterns, *Substance Use & Misuse* (2020). [DOI: 10.1080/10826084.2020.1793367](https://doi.org/10.1080/10826084.2020.1793367)

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