

Committee on Evaluating the Effects of Opioids and Benzodiazepines on All-Cause Mortality in Veterans

MEETING 2

March 9, 2023

9:00 am to 12:00 pm ET

OPEN COMMITTEE SESSION

9:00–9:05 am EST ¹	Welcome <i>Dr. Brian Strom, Committee Chair</i>
9:05-10:05	Panel: Trends in Opioid and Benzodiazepine Use, Addiction, and Related Overdose
9:05 -9:25	Secular Trends in Opioid and Benzodiazepine Use <i>Dr. Christopher Jones, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</i>
9:25-10:00	Distinguishing Between Effect of Prescription Opioids Versus Synthetic/Illicit Opioids Sequela of Opioid Addiction, Comorbid Mental Health Conditions, and Suicide Risk <i>Dr. William Becker, Yale School of Medicine</i>
10:00-11:30	Panel: Data and Design Considerations
10:00-10:40	Opioid Dose Reduction Trial Emulation <i>Dr. Erin Krebs, Minneapolis VA Health Care System</i>
10:40-11:00	Approaches to Examining Effects of Prescribed Opioid Use <i>Dr. Corey Hayes, University Arkansas for Medical Sciences</i> <i>Dr. Bradley Martin, University Arkansas for Medical Sciences</i>
11:00-11:10	Break
11:10-11:30	Data and Design: Associations between Stopping Prescriptions and Overdose or Suicide Deaths in US Veterans <i>Dr. Elizabeth Oliva, Department of Veterans Affairs</i> <i>Dr. Jodie Trafton, Department of Veterans Affairs</i>
11:30-12:00	Panel: Provider and Veteran Perspectives
11:30-11:45	Patients' and Providers Perspective on Tapering Dr. Joseph Frank, University of Colorado
11:45-12:00	Perspectives from Veterans' Service Organizations <i>Dr. Alex Balbir, Wounded Warrior Project</i>
12:00 noon	Open Session Adjourns

¹ Note: All subsequent times are in EASTERN TIME

A NOTE TO ATTENDEES

This meeting is being held to gather information to help the committee conduct its study. This committee will examine the information and material obtained during this, and other public meetings, in an effort to inform its work. Although opinions may be stated and lively discussion may ensue, no conclusions are being drawn at this time, and the committee will deliberate thoroughly before writing its draft report. Moreover, once the draft report is written, it must go through a rigorous review by experts who are anonymous to the committee, and the committee then must respond to this review with appropriate revisions that adequately satisfy the Academies' Report Review Committee and the NAS president before it is considered an official Academies report. Therefore, observers who draw conclusions about the committee's work based on today's discussions will be doing so prematurely. Furthermore, individual committee members often engage in discussion and questioning for the specific purpose of probing an issue and sharpening an argument. The comments of any committee member may not necessarily reflect the position he or she may actually hold on the subject under discussion, to say nothing of that person's future position as it may evolve in the course of the project. Any inference about an individual's position regarding findings or recommendations in the final report is therefore also premature.

IN-PERSON ATTENDANCE GUIDELINES

To prevent infection and spread of the COVID-19 virus, and as an integral measure toward the safety and health of everyone in our buildings, the National Academies require all individuals who enter our facilities to be up to date with their vaccinations against COVID-19 per CDC guidance.

Visitors may choose to wear a mask but are not required to do so. Visitors must show their official COVID-19 Vaccination Record Card (or a digital photo of the card) to the security staff at the NAS Building when they enter the facility.

Anyone who fails to present a vaccination card (or its copy) will not be allowed access to our facility; no exemptions or exceptions will be accommodated. For more details regarding access to NASEM facilities and expectations for visitors, please visit our [operating status webpage](#).

COMMUNICATION

At any time throughout the study, you may share your comments with the committee in writing. Send your comments and any supporting documentation to VAopiods@nas.edu.

To receive notification about future committee events and the report release, sign up for the listserv [here](#).

STATEMENT OF TASK

An ad hoc committee of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine will evaluate the effects of opioid and benzodiazepine use on all-cause mortality of U.S. veterans, including suicide, regardless of whether information relating to such deaths has been reported to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Specifically, the committee will quantify the effects of opioid and benzodiazepine prescribing on the risk of death among veterans who received care from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) between 2007 and 2019.

In their analysis, the committee will focus on

- (a) the effect of opioid prescribing for pain, relative to alternative non-opioid pain treatments,
- (b) the effects of higher doses relative to lower doses of opioids,
- (c) the effect of co-prescribing a benzodiazepine among patients already receiving opioids, relative to alternative treatments for anxiety and other indications for benzodiazepines, and
- (d) the effect of initiating opioids among patients already taking benzodiazepines.

SPEAKER BIOS

Christopher Jones, PharmD, DrPH, MPH

Dr. Jones currently serves as the Director of the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In this role, he oversees all aspects of the Center's scientific, policy, program, management, and operations activities and provides executive leadership over multiple national prevention programs that advance injury and violence prevention, including substance use and overdose prevention, suicide prevention, youth violence and adverse childhood experiences prevention, and core state injury and violence prevention activities.

William C. Becker, MD

Dr. Becker is a general internist additionally trained in addiction medicine and pain management who is a Core Investigator in the Pain Research, Informatics, Multi-morbidities & Education (PRIME) Center of Innovation, VA Connecticut Healthcare System and an Associate Professor, Department of Internal Medicine, Yale School of Medicine. He is the Medical Director of the Opioid Reassessment Clinic at VA Connecticut.

Erin Krebs, MD, MPH

Dr. Krebs is chief of general internal medicine at the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs (VA) Health Care System and professor of medicine at the University of Minnesota Medical School. Her professional goal is to improve the management of chronic pain in primary care. She conducts research that is informed by her practice as a primary care physician and funded by VA Health Services Research & Development, the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute, and the National Institutes of Health. Her current studies focus on opioid tapering outcomes and care of patients prescribed opioids for chronic pain. Dr. Krebs completed medical school and internal medicine residency at the University of Minnesota and received her MPH from the University of North Carolina, where she was a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Clinical Scholar.

Corey Hayes, PharmD, MPH

Dr. Hayes is a clinical pharmacist, epidemiologist, and addiction health services researcher. Dr. Hayes uses population-level claims and electronic health record data and advanced quantitative methods to improve prevention and treatment of substance use disorders. His work focuses on improving policies related to opioid prescribing and developing technology-based interventions for improving treatment of patients with opioid use disorder. Dr. Hayes received his Pharm.D. and MPH. from UAMS in 2013 and practiced for 3 years as a clinical pharmacist at Baptist Health Medical Center in Little Rock, Arkansas. From 2016-2018, Dr. Hayes completed a NIDA funded T32 Post-Doctoral Fellowship in Translational Addiction Research and completed his Ph.D. in Pharmaceutical Evaluation and Policy with an emphasis in pharmacoepidemiology.

Bradley Martin, PharmD, PhD

Elizabeth Oliva, PhD

Dr. Oliva received her PhD in Developmental Psychopathology and Clinical Science from the University of Minnesota where her graduate work examining the etiology of substance use from adolescence to early adulthood was funded by a National Science Foundation Graduate Fellowship. She completed her pre-doctoral clinical psychology internship at UCSD/VA San Diego and is currently the VA National Opioid

Overdose Education and Naloxone Distribution (OEND) Coordinator. She is an investigator at the VA Center for Innovation to Implementation (Ci2i) at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System and a Senior Evaluator for the VA Program Evaluation and Resource Center (PERC; one of three VA Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention evaluation centers). Dr. Oliva also conducts research on VA OEND implementation and post-overdose care.

Jodie Trafton, PhD

Dr. Trafton directs the Program Evaluation and Resource Center for the VHA Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. She has extensive expertise in implementation and formative evaluation of mental health, substance use disorder, and pain management innovations in health care systems, as well as informatics/decision support, program evaluation, and performance measurement using health care data.

Joseph Frank, MD, MPH

Alexander Balbir, PhD, MBA, MSQM

Dr. Balbir serves as a director at Wounded Warrior Project ®. Prior to joining Wounded Warrior Project, he served in the private sector as a healthcare consultant supporting the Department of Defense Military Health System and as the chief of operations for clinical research at the National Intrepid Center of Excellence. In 2019, he was selected as a President George W. Bush Veteran Leadership Scholar. Alex currently serves in the United States Navy Reserve as a Medical Service Corps Officer hospital/healthcare administrator. He obtained his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in public health and neurophysiology from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, focusing his work on sleep disorders in brain injury and post-traumatic stress. He also holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree from the University of North Carolina Kenan-Flagler Business School and a master's of science in quantitative management and business analytics (MSQM) degree from the Duke University Fuqua School of Business.

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Discrimination is prejudicial treatment of individuals or groups of people based on their race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion, disability, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by applicable laws.

Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Other types of harassment include any verbal or physical conduct directed at individuals or groups of people because of their race, ethnicity, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion, disability, veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by applicable laws, that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.

Bullying is unwelcome, aggressive behavior involving the use of influence, threat, intimidation, or coercion to dominate others in the professional environment.

REPORTING AND RESOLUTION

Any violation of this policy should be reported. If you experience or witness discrimination, harassment, or bullying, you are encouraged to make your unease or disapproval known to the individual at the time the incident occurs, if you are comfortable doing so. You are also urged to report any incident by:

- Filing a complaint with the Office of Human Resources at 202-334-3400 or hrrservicecenter@nas.edu, or
- Reporting the incident to an employee involved in the activity in which the member or volunteer is participating, who will then file a complaint with the Office of Human Resources.

Complaints should be filed as soon as possible after an incident. To ensure the prompt and thorough investigation of the complaint, the complainant should provide as much information as is possible, such as names, dates, locations, and steps taken. The Office of Human Resources will investigate the alleged violation in consultation with the Office of the General Counsel.

If an investigation results in a finding that an individual has committed a violation, NASEM will take the actions necessary to protect those involved in its activities from any future discrimination, harassment, or bullying, including in appropriate circumstances **the removal of an individual from current NASEM activities and a ban on participation in future activities.**

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Information contained in a complaint is kept confidential, and information is revealed only on a need-to-know basis. NASEM will not retaliate or tolerate retaliation against anyone who makes a good faith report of discrimination, harassment, or bullying.