



Drug-Related Deaths More Likely Stimulant-Linked in San Franciscans With HIV

A study of drug- and alcohol-related deaths in San Francisco reveal stark differences between people with and without HIV.

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Among people in San Francisco who die of drug- or alcohol-related causes, having HIV is tied to a higher rate of death driven by stimulants, including crystal meth, Healio reports.

Ayesha A. Appa, MD, of the University of California, San Francisco, led a study team that gathered data on people 14 years old and older who died of drug- or alcohol-related causes in San Francisco between 2009 and 2018. They published their findings in *Open Forum Infectious Diseases*.

The researchers obtained these data from the California Electronic Death Reporting System's drug-related death records and then cross-checked this information with death certificates to determine individuals' HIV status.

A total of 6,764 people, including 223 people with HIV, died of drug- or alcohol-related causes during this period.

Forty percent of the deaths among people with HIV were related to cocaine, amphetamine, methamphetamine and methylphenidate, compared with 29% of the deaths among the HIV-negative individuals. A respective 21% and 13% of the deaths in each group were related to methamphetamine in particular. In contrast, a respective 26% and 46% of the deaths in each group were related to alcohol.

The study authors also determined whether the deaths in their data set were among people experiencing acute, non-HIV-related, infections. Twenty-six percent of the people with HIV had such an infection when they died, compared with 8% of those without HIV.

After adjusting the data to account for various differences between the individuals in the data set, the study authors found that having HIV was associated with a 5.6-fold increased likelihood of having an acute infection with a pathogen other than HIV at the time of their death.

Among those who had such an acute infection, 31% of those with HIV had sepsis or septic shock at the time of their death, compared with 49% of those without HIV. A respective 29% and 41% had pneumonia, 8% and 8% had endocarditis (a dangerous infection of the heart common among people who inject drugs), 2% and 7% had skin and soft tissue infections and 3% and 5% had bacteremia (bacteria in the bloodstream).

“Combating mortality in people with HIV who use drugs should include stimulant-specific and infection prevention efforts,” the study authors wrote.

To read the Healio article, [click here](#).

To read the study abstract, [click here](#).

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