Transcript for “U.S. Opioid Epidemic, Part 1”

Video Description
This video from Week 9 of Sue J. Goldie’s general education course, World Health: Challenges and Opportunities, is part one of three videos on the U.S. opioid epidemic. Here we take a big picture of view of what the epidemic looks like in the United States over time. Length of video is 6 minutes and 29 seconds. Watch the U.S. Opioid Epidemic, Part 1 video on Vimeo.

Transcript
Hi, everyone. Good morning. We're going to talk today about the US opioid epidemic. And what I'd like to do is do it in three different sections. In the first section, we're going to look at an image and we're going to take a big picture view of what this epidemic looks like in the United States over time. In the second section, we're going to ask the question, why does it look like that? What are the factors that are contributing to the trends and patterns that we're seeing? And in the third section, we're going to look at how we can respond to the opioid epidemic, how have we responded, and what does the future look like in terms of our capacity?

So with that, let's get started. So take a look down here. The very first thing I want to emphasize to you is that actually, it's not one epidemic, it's three. And we're going to call this either three epidemics, or three phases of the epidemic. But you'll quickly see that they're going to be three distinct components that we'll need to separate out. So let's introduce you to this graph and then go over it.

On the vertical axis I have opioid-related deaths, and these are reported in thousands-- so from 5,000 to 30,000. On the horizontal axis, I have time starting at 1999, and then we're going up to 2018. 2018 is our latest available empiric data. And I've marked some other dates on here. They're going to be particular moments in time. We have three colors, so that we're going to be looking at three different trends. So let's start with the first trend.

In the first trend, we're going to start here in 1999, and I'm just going to roughly map it out. And what this curve represents is the pattern of prescription opioid use. So in the 1990s, all the way up to-- really, 2017-18, this is the first year we've had a little bit of leveling off-- we've had an increase in opioid-related deaths due to prescription opioids. So this blue we'll just jot down in our legend, prescription opioids. And sometimes you'll hear these referred to as natural, or semi-synthetic opioids. Again, we'll talk about the why in our next section.

So we often will call this Phase 1, or we can call it Epidemic 1. I'll call it Phase 1 here. Now, you know there's two more coming, so let's look at the second phase. The second phase starts here, and here we're going to have an increase that's going to begin around 2010. And it's going to continue, and take a teeny tick down in 2018. So what does this curve represent? This curve represents opioid-related deaths due to heroin use. So we'll stick that in our legend here, and
just to remind you, it's starting in about 2010, so we'll call this Phase 2. OK, now we're up to the third component, or the third epidemic.

And so we'll trace that here, and at about 2013, we're going to escalate. And look where this curve is going, straight up. What does this curve represent? Well, these are escalating opioid-related deaths due to the synthetic opioids, or products like fentanyl. And synthetic opioids-- as you'll learn-- are far more potent and dangerous than prescription opioids. So fentanyl is one example.

So big picture, take a look here. You're looking at three overlapping epidemics-- prescription opioids, heroin use, synthetic opioids. In terms of what the consequences have been over time, between 1999 and 2018 when we have pretty good data, there have been 446,032 deaths in the United States due to opioids. So what I first like to do is ask you a thought question, and then we'll go to our section two and unpack why this looks like it does.

So here's the provocative question that I'm going to ask you now, and I'm also going to ask you again, at the very end of our three segments. So I'm going to ask you, who is most responsible for this crisis? What I hope is that by asking you now, and then by asking you again at the end of our three segments, it'll cause some provocative thoughts about the way you think about the complexity of policy. So take a look here, and I'm going to bring up several different actors that are going to be in this story.

So I want you to consider drug dealers, drug distributors, physicians, drug companies, drug users, regulatory agencies, or anyone else that you can think of. And what I'm going to ask you to think about is, if I requested that you rank order who is most responsible to who is least responsible, what would you say? I'm going to ask you to do this without looking at anything. I don't want you to read, I don't want you to look anything up. I want you just right now to take a piece of paper and rank order these actors, and add any that you want. And then you're going to finish this segment and do a quiz, which is going to help us compare our answers now, and then when we're completely done with our three segments.

So I will ask you to rejoin me for segment two in a moment, and with that, we're going to sign off. Fill in your rank order, and I'll see you soon.