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### Evaluating the rates of opioid overdose by county in Middle TN

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## Abstract

Opioid misuse presents a well-documented and substantial threat to human health, with potentially life-threatening issues. Improved access to healthcare and increased social support are believed to contribute to better health outcomes for individuals in higher socioeconomic classes (McMaughan et al. , 2020). Conversely, individuals in lower socioeconomic classes may experience poorer health and engage in more hazardous occupations (Ravesteijn et al. , 2013). These disparities are thought to be linked to factors such as limited access to quality healthcare and greater exposure to non-prescription opioid drugs among those in lower socioeconomic classes. Data was obtained from mySidewalk. Specific variables of interest extracted from the database included: median income by county, medicare total prescriptions, opioid dispensing rate, drug overdose, medicare opioid prescription. Data was aggregated at the county level. The present study examined the relationship between opioid overdose rates and income level, specifically in counties in Middle Tennessee. The findings do not indicate a relationship between opioid overdose rates and income level. However, there is a relationship between general drug overdose rates and poor mental health status with income. Because the data did not provide specific drugs of overdose, further research is needed to better understand the multifactorial impacts that may lead to opioid abuse.

**Key Words: opioid; overdose; Middle Tennessee; socioeconomic status; Medicare prescriptions; mental health**