

US Drug Deaths □Rose by 21% Over Last Year□r□ Causing Drop in US Life Expectancy□

written by GEG | December 22, 2017



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“This is urgent and deadly,” said Dr. Brenda Fitzgerald, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The opioid epidemic “clearly has a huge impact on our entire society.”

Two-thirds of last year’s drug deaths – about 42,000 – involved opioids, a category that includes heroin, methadone, prescription pain pills like OxyContin, and fentanyl. Fatal overdoses that involved fentanyl and fentanyl-like drugs doubled in one year, to more than 19,000, mostly from illegally made pills or powder, which is often mixed with heroin or other drugs.

Heroin was tied to 15,500 deaths and prescription painkillers to 14,500 deaths. The

balance of the overdose deaths involved sedatives, cocaine and methamphetamines. More than one drug is often involved in an overdose death.

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Preliminary 2017 figures show the rise in overdose deaths continuing.

The drug deaths weigh into CDC's annual calculation of the average time a person is expected to live. The life expectancy figure is based on the year of their birth, current death trends and other factors. For decades, it was on the upswing, rising a few months nearly every year. But last year marked the first time in more than a half century that U.S. life expectancy fell two consecutive years.

A baby born last year in the U.S. is expected to live about 78 years and 7 months, on average, the CDC said. An American born in 2015 was expected to live about a month longer and one born in 2014 about two months longer than that.

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