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Letter to the Editor:

Response to Letter to the Editor

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We thank Drs. Ruan and Kaye for their interest in our study of emergency department (ED) utilization and subsequent prescription drug overdose mortality [1]. They ask if we included heroin deaths in the outcome measure. As described in the Methods section of our article (page 614), the outcome of interest in our study was prescription drug overdose death. Therefore, overdose deaths from heroin and other illicit substances were not included in the outcome measure.

We agree with Drs. Ruan and Kaye that the treatment of chronic pain for patients with psychiatric comorbidities is especially challenging and that all physicians should exercise their prescribing privilege responsibly, particularly when prescribing controlled substances such as opioid analgesics. To improve prescribing practice, it is important to provide physicians with actionable knowledge and effective tools. Our study adds valuable evidence to the knowledge base and the tool box for emergency care providers and other health care practitioners to reduce the excess death toll from prescription drug overdose.

Reference

1. Brady JE, DiMaggio CJ, Keyes KM, Doyle JJ, Richardson LD, Li G. Emergency department utilization and subsequent prescription drug overdose death. *Ann Epidemiol.* 2015; 25(8):613–619.e2. [PubMed: 25935710]