

Supply-side policies for reducing opioid harm: are they working in Australia?

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Over the past two decades, opioid-related harm has increased in many parts of the world. In some high-income countries, this began with rapidly increasing use of prescription opioids. Following this initial rise in prescription opioid use and harm were increasing harms from heroin. In North America, the emergence of fentanyl and novel synthetic opioids in the illicit drug market then contributed to dramatic increases in opioid-related mortality.

A common approach to address rising harms with prescription opioids has been to use supply-side interventions. Internationally, these have included tamper-resistant formulations of opioid pain medicines, rescheduling lower potency opioids to increase the controls around their supply, and the implementation of prescription drug monitoring programs. The impact of these policies internationally has been mixed.

This presentation will examine the impact of different supply-side strategies that have aimed to reduce prescription opioid harm in Australia, examining new data on the impact of interventions such as Australia's real-time prescription monitoring programs. It will also examine similarities and differences between Australia and other countries in terms of recent trends following supply-side interventions, and what this might mean for policy and practice.