

Video Script: “A Message from the Inspector General: Review of the Drug Enforcement Administration’s Regulatory and Enforcement Efforts to Control the Diversion of Opioids,” October 2019

Hello, I'm Michael Horowitz, Inspector General for the U.S. Department of Justice.

Today, we released a report that reviewed the Drug Enforcement Administration's, or DEA's, response to the significant increase in opioid use, and abuse, in the United States over the past two decades. From 1999 to 2013, opioid-related deaths grew by about 8% per year. Then, from 2013 to 2017, the opioid death rate grew further by about 70% per year.

DEA is responsible for regulating opioid production quotas and investigating its illegal diversion. We found that DEA was slow to respond to this growing public health crisis, and its regulatory and enforcement efforts could have been more effective.

For example, despite growing evidence that opioids were being overprescribed and misused, DEA increased oxycodone production quotas by 400% between 2002 and 2013. It wasn't until 2017 that DEA significantly reduced the production quota for oxycodone, by 25%.*

We also found that DEA does not capture sufficient data to detect emerging drug trends or suspicious orders in a timely manner, which may have contributed to its overall slow response to the opioid crisis.

We found that the Department of Justice and the DEA recently have taken some important steps to address the opioid crisis. For example, they've refocused their prosecution and regulatory efforts. But, as we outline in our report, more work is needed.

We make several recommendations to help DEA enhance its ability to detect the diversion of controlled substances like opioids, which hopefully will assist DEA in its efforts to prevent a similar health care crisis from occurring in the future.

To read the report, visit our website, oig.justice.gov, or go to oversight.gov.

Thank you for joining us.

(Stock media provided by composer William Pearson and publisher Prolific Two Publishing / Pond5.com, www.pond5.com.)

*On December 16, 2019, page 13 of the report was updated to clarify information relating to production quotas. This video has been removed from the DOJ OIG website.