

Research-informed Innovations in Policing-Behavioral Health Collaborative Approaches to Address the Global Opioid Epidemic



Josephine D. Korchmaros¹ and Kevin Hall²

¹Southwest Institute for Research on Women, University of Arizona, Tucson, Arizona, United States of America

²Spokane Police Department, Spokane, Washington, United States of America

The global opioid epidemic has had wide-spread and increasingly negative impact. In the United States of America (USA) alone, in April 2021, drug overdose deaths exceeded 100,000 for the prior 12-month period — a 28.5% increase from the preceding 12-month period (https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/nchs_press_releases/2021/20211117.htm). Law enforcement agencies across the globe have started to implement police-led collaborative pre-arrest deflection models in hopes of addressing opioid misuse while minimizing additional problems created by responding with justice involvement. These models leverage daily interactions between police and community members to identify people who have substance misuse problems, provide a brief intervention to encourage engagement in treatment, and provide connections to treatment providers in lieu of arrest.

This presentation will describe recent advances in research-informed innovations in policing-behavioral health collaborative approaches to address the opioid epidemic. Presenters will describe different types of research-informed pre-arrest deflection models being implemented in different countries. They will summarize research findings examining the feasibility, acceptability, cost-savings, and effectiveness of pre-arrest deflection programs. Although this field of research is emerging and still limited, results of recent research in this field suggest that police-led pre-arrest deflection is a viable effective targeted law enforcement response to address the opioid epidemic. Moreover, results show potential for longer-term reductions in substance misuse and associated criminal activity overall and when compared to arrest, while minimizing the negative impacts of justice involvement. Presenters will also summarize the emerging research literature informing recommendations for further advancement of policing-behavioral health collaborative approaches to address the global opioid epidemic.

Biography:

Josephine D. Korchmaros, PhD, is Director of the University of Arizona's Southwest Institute for Research on Women, USA. Since earning her doctoral degree in Social Psychology with a focus on quantitative research methods in 2003, Dr. Korchmaros has developed, implemented, and evaluated numerous interprofessional, community-based projects addressing group-based disparities. She has also provided training and technical assistance for the development of a workforce equipped to provide tailored, affirming support to marginalized populations. Her research has focused on disease management models; health risk and supportive behaviors; and system and policy improvement in such areas as sexual health, substance misuse, and justice-involvement.

Kevin Hall, M.A., is the Chief of Police of the Spokane Police Department, Washington, USA. He has more than 30 years experience in policing. Throughout his career, he has worked in various assignments within policing, including Field Operations, the Gang Unit, Physical Child Abuse Unit, Internal Affairs, Homicide, and the Home Invasion/Kidnapping Unit. When he was Assistant Chief of the Tucson Police Department in Arizona, USA, he developed and implemented a comprehensive pre-arrest deflection program for non-violent charges associated with substance misuse. This program includes peer support specialist co-responders embedded within the police department, active outreach, self-referral, and harm-reduction practices.