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Types of child maltreatment and child welfare involvement among opioid-using mothers involved in substance use treatment

Angela Moreland ^a  , Carla Newman ^a, Kathleen I. Crum ^{a, c}, Funlola Are ^{a, b}

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Highlights

- Literature has not linked opioid use disorder with child maltreatment risk.
- Results suggest similarities and differences among mothers who use opioids and other substances.
- Mothers who use opioids endorsed more significant and prolonged involvement with child welfare than mothers who use other substances.
- Participants did not endorse significant differences between rates of child maltreatment, and treatment engagement across groups.

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Abstract

Although there is a significant link between maternal substance use and child maltreatment risk, extant literature has not investigated this link specifically among the growing number of parents abusing opioids. Underreporting of opioid use within child welfare presents further challenges in elucidating relations between maternal opioid use and child maltreatment. The purpose of the current study is to examine the link between maternal opioid use in women in substance use treatment and self-reported rates of child maltreatment and child welfare involvement of their children. We examined maternal substance use, severity of substance use, severity and type of child maltreatment of their children, and child welfare involvement across mothers who misuse opioids and misuse other substances using self-report surveys with 89 mothers. Results suggest similarities and differences among mothers who use opioids and other substances. Mothers who use opioids endorsed more significant and prolonged involvement with child welfare than mothers who use other substances. Participants did not endorse significant differences between rates of child maltreatment, and treatment engagement across groups. Given increased awareness of significant risks associated with opioid abuse, including greater risk for child maltreatment, a better understanding of its intersection with child welfare is necessary.

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Keywords

Child maltreatment; Opioid use disorder; Child welfare

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