Comparing and contrasting the Opioid Crisis with past illicit drug epidemics can be useful for thinking about how it may evolve and what policy responses could be most effective. In this talk, I will describe some of the key aspects of the Opioid Crisis and previous epidemics, focusing on two epidemics that I have direct research on: an opioid crisis that occurred in Australia in the 1990s, and the U.S. crack cocaine epidemic. I will then consider what is different and what may be similar about this current epidemic, and what that suggests about policy options and responses.

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