

Today's Health with CMT

Surgeon Generals Request - Turn the Tide Campaign to Address Opioid Addiction

Sept 15, 2016 13:00 EST

The U.S. Surgeon General is taking historic action by sending a personal letter to more than 2.3 million health care practitioners and public health leaders. He is seeking our help to address the prescription opioid crisis. At CMT, we want to make sure you are aware of and have read his letter, a copy of which is included below.

The U.S Surgeon General is asking practitioners to visit www.TurnTheTideRx.org/join to join with clinicians from across the country in a simple but powerful movement to end this epidemic and sign the pledge.

Read the letter. Take the pledge. And spread the word.

Together, we can save countless lives. We can lead the way. We can #TurnTheTide.



UNITED STATES SURGEON GENERAL

Vivek H. Murthy, M.D., M.B.A.

August 2016

Dear Colleague,

I am asking for your help to solve an urgent health crisis facing America: the opioid epidemic. Everywhere I travel, I see communities devastated by opioid overdoses. I meet families too ashamed to seek treatment for addiction. And I will never forget my own patient whose opioid use disorder began with a course of morphine after a routine procedure.

It is important to recognize that we arrived at this place on a path paved with good intentions. Nearly two decades ago, we were encouraged to be more aggressive about treating pain, often without enough training and support to do so safely. This coincided with heavy marketing of opioids to doctors. Many of us were even taught - incorrectly - that opioids are not addictive when prescribed for legitimate pain.

The results have been devastating. Since 1999, opioid overdose deaths have quadrupled and opioid prescriptions have increased markedly - almost enough for every adult in America to have a bottle of pills. Yet the amount of pain reported by Americans has not changed. Now, nearly 2 million people in America have a prescription opioid use disorder, contributing to increased heroin use and the spread of HIV and hepatitis C.

I know solving this problem will not be easy. We often struggle to balance reducing our patients' pain with increasing their risk of opioid addiction. But, as clinicians, we have the unique power to help end this epidemic. As cynical as times may seem, the public still looks to our profession for hope during difficult moments. This is one of those times.

That is why I am asking you to pledge your commitment to turn the tide on the opioid crisis. [Please take the pledge.](#)

Together, we will build a national movement of clinicians to do three things: First, we will educate ourselves to treat pain safely and effectively. A good place to start is this [pocket guide](#) with the CDC Opioid Prescribing Guideline. Second, we will screen our patients for opioid use disorder and provide or connect them with evidence-based treatment. Third, we can shape how the rest of the country sees addiction by talking about and treating it as a chronic illness, not a moral failing.

Years from now, I want us to look back and know that, in the face of a crisis that threatened our nation, it was our profession that stepped up and led the way. I know we can succeed because health care is more than an occupation to us. It is a calling rooted in empathy, science, and service to humanity. These values unite us. They remain our greatest strength.

Thank you for your leadership.



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