



Opioid Abuse Epidemic: *Solutions from the Front Lines of Care*

Every day, pharmacists face a moment of truth. When presented with an opioid prescription, a pharmacist must make decisions as a provider of patient care, and as part of the drug-abuse solution. *Based on these experiences, NACDS has announced four recommendations on this complex issue, to complement pharmacy’s ongoing collaboration with other healthcare professionals and with law enforcement.*

Legislate a 7-day supply limit for initial opioid prescriptions issued for acute pain

This limit is informed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain

CDC clinical evidence: greater amount of initial opioid exposure is associated with greater risk for long-term use and addiction

Over 30 states already have taken action; federal legislation is needed for consistent patient care

Create a nationwide prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP) database through collaboration

Most states use data to help identify and prevent drug abuse and diversion, but program variances limit their effectiveness

It is necessary to harmonize state requirements for reporting and accessing PDMP data, and to create one system with unified expectations by healthcare providers and law enforcement

A nationwide PDMP database would leverage e-prescribing to provide guidance for prescribers and dispensers in real-time when providing patient care

Legislate a requirement that all prescriptions be issued electronically, with limited exceptions

E-prescribing enhances security and curbs fraud, waste and abuse; and Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) e-prescribing requirements call for two-factor authentication, reducing the likelihood of fraudulent prescribing

Broad adoption of this policy would be timely, as e-prescribing of controlled substances has been legal in all 50 states since September 2015 and federal law requires that controlled substances prescriptions covered under Medicare Part D be electronically transmitted starting in 2021

Only 31 percent of controlled substance prescriptions are issued electronically

Enable pharmacies to provide prescription disposal solutions that meet patients’ needs

Currently, many pharmacies offer disposal programs as appropriate by community and by store

Flexible disposal programs wherein pharmacies elect to provide consumers with at least one of the several DEA authorized options for drug disposal is universally workable

Educational materials also are in use, and could be expanded in appropriate ways

These new public policy concepts complement pharmacy’s existing and extensive collaborative efforts, including: compliance programs; pioneering e-prescribing; drug disposal; patient education; security initiatives; fostering naloxone access; stopping illegal online drug-sellers and rogue clinics; and more. For more information, please visit accessagenda.NACDS.org.