



NEW LIMITS ON OPIATE PRESCRIPTIONS FOR ACUTE PAIN WILL SAVE LIVES AND FIGHT ADDICTION

As the epidemic of opiate abuse and addiction continues to sweep the country, state, local and community leaders constantly look to improve their efforts to combat it by responding with newer, better tools. Ohio is no different. Ohio is investing about \$1 billion each year to battle drug abuse and addiction. Additionally, Ohio has:

- Shut down dozens of pill mills;
- Taken more than 250 actions against medical licenses because of prescribing issues;
- Increased seizures of illegal drugs resulting in more than 100 percent increase in drug arrests;
- Adopted some of the nation's first guidelines to reduce opiate prescriptions;
- Strengthened electronic tools that combat doctor shopping and promote responsible prescribing;
- Launched a youth drug prevention effort comprised of proven, peer-reviewed strategies; and
- Dramatically increased recovery housing and addiction treatment efforts in local communities.

It is a tough battle, but Ohio's efforts are paying off and have helped the state reduce opiate prescriptions by 20 percent and doctor shopping by 78 percent—that means fewer opiates in circulation for illegal diversion or unauthorized use. Prescription opiates are often the gateway to heroin use. Because most nonmedical users of prescription opiates obtain them from friends and relatives for free and 74 percent of those who died of a drug overdose in 2015 had a previous controlled substance prescription, we know that shutting down this avenue to addiction is an essential prevention strategy.

New Rules Aim to Reduce Excess Opiate Supply

Effective August 31, 2017, Ohio's health care regulatory boards will implement new limits on prescriptions issued for the treatment of acute pain. The rules are only intended to treat conditions resulting in acute pain, including those that normally fade with healing such as a surgical procedure or a bone fracture. The adoption of these rules can lead to an estimated reduction of opiate doses in Ohio by 109 million per year while preserving the ability of clinicians to address pain in a competent and compassionate way.

Highlights of Ohio's new opiate prescribing limits for acute pain include:

1. No more than seven days of opiates can be prescribed for adults;
2. No more than five days of opiates can be prescribed for minors;
3. Health care providers can prescribe opiates in excess of the day supply limits only if they provide a specific reason in the patient's medical record. Unless such a reason is given, a health care provider is prohibited from prescribing opiates that exceed Ohio's limits;
4. Except for certain conditions specified in the rules, the total morphine equivalent dose (MED) of a prescription for acute pain cannot exceed an average of 30 MED per day;
5. The new limits do not apply to opioids prescribed for cancer, palliative care, end-of-life/hospice care or medication-assisted treatment for addiction.

To help enforce the limited exceptions to the rules and enhance data regarding prescribing trends, prescribers will be required to include a diagnosis or procedure code on every controlled substance prescription, which will be entered into Ohio's prescription monitoring program, OARRS. This provision goes into effect on December 29, 2017 for all opiate prescriptions and June 1, 2018 for all other controlled substance prescriptions.

BOTTOM LINE: By working together with health care providers, Ohio is making significant strides in reducing the number of opiates prescribed. With these new limits, it's estimated that the state could see an additional reduction of 109 million opiate doses. By reducing the availability of unused prescription opiates, fewer Ohioans will be presented with opportunities to misuse these highly addictive medications.

