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Wolf Administration Discusses Latest Updated Prescribing Guidelines as Part of STOP OVERDOSES IN PA: GET HELP NOW WEEK

Harrisburg, PA – Wolf Administration officials today joined health care providers to announce the latest updated prescribing guideline, [Treating Pain in Patients with OUD](#), as part of the second **Stop Overdoses in PA: Get Help Now Week**, a statewide initiative to get the overdose reversal medication naloxone to Pennsylvanians and get help for residents suffering from the disease of opioid use disorder (OUD).

“The prescribing guidelines developed by the Safe and Effective Prescribing Task Force are essential to assist health care providers as they treat their patients,” Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. “In updating the guidelines on how to treat pain in patients with opioid use disorder, we are helping physicians as they work to treat people who are already dealing with the disease of addiction. It is important that physicians look at a wide range of therapies as they work to treat this growing subset of the population.”

The updated guideline discusses the potential for using treatments such as physical therapy, acupuncture, osteopathic or chiropractic treatment, non-opioid medications and mindfulness-based therapies to assist patients suffering with pain and opioid use disorder. Health care providers are also reminded of the prevalence of additional disorders that may affect someone with pain and OUD, such as depression, anxiety and sleep disorders.

Within the document, types of pain are broken down to assist doctors treating patients with OUD and chronic, non-cancer pain, cancer pain and acute pain. Each of these types of pain require a care plan that is uniquely developed to help the individual patient.

“Health care professionals play a vital role in combatting the opioid crisis,” said Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs Secretary Jen Smith. “The reality is that even individuals with opioid use disorder experience chronic pain and need treatment plans that meet their unique needs. We must give physicians the tools to adequately treat individuals living with opioid use disorder to ensure they can lead happy, healthy lives.”

In celebrating National Recovery Month, Pennsylvania is hosting **Stop Overdoses in PA: Get Help Now Week**, where residents will be able to go to a state health center or their local pharmacy to get the overdose reversal medication naloxone. This medication reverses the effects of an opioid overdose and gives the patient a chance at recovery.

“We cannot get someone into treatment if they are dead,” Governor Tom Wolf said. “Naloxone saves lives and we should all carry it because you never know when you will get the chance to help someone. Last year, we distributed over 7,000 kits of free naloxone during our first Stop Overdoses in PA: Get Help Now Week. This year, we hope to get this life-saving tool into the hands of even more Pennsylvanians.”

The Opioid Command Center, established in January 2018 when Gov. Wolf signed the first opioid disaster declaration, meets every week to discuss the opioid crisis. The command center is staffed by personnel from 17 state agencies, spearheaded by the departments of Health and Drug and Alcohol Programs. Work to address the opioid crisis focuses on three areas: prevention, rescue and treatment. Efforts over the past four years, working with state agencies, local, regional and federal officials, have resulted in significant action to address the opioid crisis. Recent efforts include:

- The Prescription Drug Monitoring Program has reduced opioid prescriptions by 27 percent and has virtually eliminated doctor shopping.
- The Opioid Data Dashboard and Data Dashboard 2.0 is providing public-facing data regarding prevention, rescue and treatment.
- The waiver of birth certificate fees for those with opioid use disorder has helped close to 2,500 people, enabling easier entry into recovery programs.
- A standing order signed by Dr. Rachel Levine in 2018 allowed EMS to leave behind nearly 1,100 doses of naloxone.
- More than 6,000 health care professionals have been visited and provided training on how to prescribe opioids cautiously and judiciously.
- 813 drug take-back boxes help Pennsylvanians properly dispose of unwanted drugs, including 482,000 pounds of unwanted drugs in 2018.
- The Get Help Now Hotline received more than 25,000 calls, with nearly half of all callers connected directly to a treatment provider.
- The state prison system has expanded their Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) program, which is viewed as a model program for other states.
- More than 100 licensed physicians or prescribers have been disciplined for wrongful practice over the past two years.
- Several agencies have worked together to collaborate on the seizure and destruction of illicit opioids across Pennsylvania.
- The coordination with seven major commercial providers has expanded access to naloxone and mental health care, while also working to make it more affordable.
- Naloxone has been made available to first responders through the Commission on Crime and Delinquency, with more than 25,000 doses made available and more than 4,500 saves through that program. In addition, EMS have administered more than 25,000 doses of naloxone and more than 7,000 doses were made available to members of the public during the state’s naloxone distribution last year.

For more information on Pennsylvania’s response to the opioid crisis visit www.pa.gov/opioids.

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