



Nursing's Role in Addressing Nation's Opioid Crisis

Opioid drug-related overdose has risen steadily over the past two decades, becoming one of the leading causes of death in the United States. The American Nurses Association (ANA) recognizes the central role nurses can play in addressing this crisis and has set out to develop resources aimed at promoting a comprehensive approach.

As health care providers practicing on the front lines of the opioid epidemic, registered nurses are qualified and well positioned to play a leading role in assessing, diagnosing, and managing patients battling addiction.

Stemming the tide of opioid addiction and overdose deaths in the U.S. demands a comprehensive approach. ANA recognizes the significance of this public health crisis and is committed to helping nursing stand as a leading provider in the fight against opioid dependence, overdose, and death.

Expanded Access to Medication-Assisted Treatment

Expanding access to medication-assisted treatment (MAT) is a critical step in addressing the growing opioid epidemic, comprehensively. ANA has sought to amend the Drug Addiction Treatment Act of 2000 (DATA 2000) in order to allow Advance Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) with appropriate training to prescribe buprenorphine. Expansion of the DATA 2000 waiver program to include the four APRN roles would safely and significantly increase access to medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for patients who need it most.

Prescriber Education & Training

ANA believes the current crisis calls for additional support and focus on prescriber education -- advanced practice registered nurse (APRNs) education already prepares practitioners to effectively and safely prescribe opioids. Taking steps to ensure that health care professionals who prescribe opioids are properly trained and educated in opioid prescribing is a critical and necessary investment.

In collaboration with the White House, ANA proudly joined forces with 40 other provider groups in a pledge to train more than 540,000 opioid prescribers over the next two years.

Deterrent Formulations

ANA urges greater investments in the scientific and clinical research needed to advance the development, assessment, and deployment of abuse-deterrent technologies. Issues surrounding abuse and misuse of prescription opioids must be balanced with the real and legitimate needs of those seeking treatment for pain. Developing abuse deterrent formulations (ADFs) is an important tool in preventing abuse. The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) considers the development of these products a high public health priority.



The Role of Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs)

ANA supports the increased utilization of PDMPs and will be working with our constituent/state nurses association to increase awareness of PDMPs and the number of APRN prescribers who are registered.

Prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMPs) play an important role in preventing inappropriate access to prescription opioids. While interventions to improve safe and appropriate prescribing must be employed to curb dangerous practices, it is important that any such improvements don't serve to limit access to appropriate pain management for patients that need it.

Increase Access to Opioid Antagonist - Naloxone

ANA supports increasing access to Naloxone for first responders, family, friends, and caregivers of those who are known to be chronic users of opioids. Naloxone is a critical tool in preventing overdose by opioids such as heroin, morphine, and oxycodone. ANA believes that the development of civil liability protections for those trained in administration of Naloxone should coincide with any efforts to increase access and that third party payers, including Medicaid and Medicare, should cover this life saving measure.