



WHA Board Supports Prescriber, Patient Opioid Education

Background

The use and abuse of opioids has been detrimental to the public health of the great state of Wisconsin. Opioid pain relievers, such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, and methadone, contributed to 45 percent of the 843 drug overdose deaths in 2013, while heroin contributed to 27 percent. Drug overdose deaths in Wisconsin doubled from 2004 to 2013.

Prescription drugs, illicit drugs and over-the-counter medication – were the underlying cause of death for 97 percent of all Wisconsin poisoning deaths. Of these deaths, 14 percent were suicides; and, according to Wisconsin Attorney General Brad Schimel’s September, 2015 public information campaign, “Deaths from unintended drug overdoses have been rising sharply in recent years. In 2011, prescription painkillers accounted for close to 17,000 deaths in the United States. That’s more than three times the number of deaths a decade earlier – just 5,528 in 2001 (National Institute on Drug Abuse)”.

It is estimated that in Wisconsin in 2014, opioid and other narcotic misuse and abuse resulted in 1,463 emergency room visits; and it is reported that 2.4 million people nation-wide are addicted to opiates according to the 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

Wisconsin Rep. John Nygren launched in September, 2015 a second HOPE (Heroin, Opiate Prevention and Education) legislation package. In a press release Nygren stated, “Many people aren’t aware that, in many cases, heroin addiction begins with addiction to prescription medications. Whether these medications are obtained legally or not, we need to do our best to curtail the illegal use of these dangerous substances.”

On December 17, the Wisconsin hospital Association passed the following resolution:

Recognizing that Wisconsin hospitals play an important role in addressing this public health issue, the Wisconsin Hospital Association Board of Directors supports the efforts of WHA member hospitals in raising awareness of this issue, in developing specific strategies to address the use and abuse of opioids, and creating a culture of change that is responsive to the growing epidemic of opioid use and abuse in Wisconsin.

Hospitals and health systems will support educational programs for their prescribers regarding the magnitude of the problem, prescribers’ role in addressing the problem, including patient education, and best clinical practices. Hospitals and health systems will assess prescribers’ clinical practice and identify and address opportunities for improvement.