



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

House Joint Policy Committees
August 31st, 2016
Karen Murphy, PhD, RN
Secretary of Health

Good Morning Representatives Benninghoff, Sturla, and members of the Policy Committees. I am Karen Murphy, Secretary of Health, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the opportunity to discuss the ongoing opioid epidemic in the commonwealth.

Governor Wolf, myself, and the entire administration stand firm in our commitment to fight this public health crisis head on, and as you all are aware, the administration has implemented several initiatives in the fight against heroin and opioid abuse.

Physician General Rachel Levine last year signed two statewide standing orders for naloxone, making it possible for all Pennsylvanians to access this life-saving drug. Pennsylvania State Police has been equipped with naloxone and we are working with the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, as well as the District Attorneys and other parties to ensure that this drug gets into the hands of all law enforcement officers, first responders as well as families and loved ones of those addicted to opioids can have another chance at life.

This chance will not come without treatment. DOH is also working with the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs to develop the “warm hand-off” process, whereby overdose survivors would be taken directly from the emergency department to a licensed drug treatment provider. Additionally, Governor Wolf and the Department of Human Services are working on opening twenty Centers of Excellence by October 1st.

In an effort to curtail drug addiction and curb the supply of excess drugs that can be used illicitly, the department is leading an effort to build upon the opioid prescribing guidelines already created, including specialty specific guidelines for emergency department providers, dentists, obstetricians and gynecologists, and pharmacists. These guidelines give healthcare providers direction for safe and effective pain relief practices, with greater emphasis on non-opioid therapies and greater caution to prevent addiction and diversion. In addition, the department recently joined dozens of healthcare organizations, medical experts, and consumer advocacy groups in signing petitions requesting changes to federal pain management requirements that are believed to foster dangerous prescribing practices.

The Pennsylvania guidelines on the use of opioids to treat chronic non-cancer pain were published in 2014. These guidelines address the use of opioids for the treatment of chronic

non-cancer pain. These guidelines are intended to supplement and not replace the individual prescriber's clinical judgment.

Under Governor Wolf's leadership, the Department of Health and the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs have convened the Safe and Effective Prescribing Practices Task Force. Membership of the task force includes various state agencies, representatives from medical associations, provider advocates, and community members.

The Task Force developed and adopted guidelines for six medical specialties on the safe and effective use of opioids in the treatment of pain:

- **Emergency Department Pain Treatment Guidelines:** To appropriately relieve pain and attempt to identify those who maybe be abusing or addicted to opioid analgesics and refer them for special assistance.
- **Opioid Use and Safe Prescribing for Geriatric Pain:** This guideline will highlight special problems concerning using opioids when treating older adults for chronic non-cancer pain.
- **Guidelines on the Use of Opioids to Treat Chronic Non-cancer Pain:** These guidelines address the use of opioids for the treatment of chronic non-cancer pain. These guidelines do not address the use of opioids for acute pain, nor do they address the use of opioids for the treatment of pain at the end-of-life.
- **Guidelines on the Use of Opioids in a Dental Practice:** These guidelines address the use of opioids for the treatment of acute dental pain.
- **Obstetrics and Gynecology Pain Treatment:** This guideline addresses the use of opioids for the treatment of pain in pregnant patients, during and immediately following delivery, and during breastfeeding.
- **Opioid Dispensing Guidelines:** These guidelines are focused on several key areas that can impact pharmacists of any practice setting. Focal points include assessing the appropriateness of opioid pain medication at the point of dispensing, recognition of "red flags" on prescriptions as well as high risk medication combinations, available resources for

those with a substance use disorder, and methods to prevent diversion from the emergency department.

Effective Friday, August 25th, the new ABC-MAP Prescription Monitoring Database Program (PDMP) went into effect. Since the 1970s, Pennsylvania has had a prescription drug monitoring program, however it's been run by the Attorney General's Office and only available to law enforcement. The new program will be run by the department and will now be open to licensed health professionals. The PDMP online database allows prescribers and dispensers of controlled substances to monitor who is obtaining opioids, who prescriptions are being obtained from, and how often they are prescribed. This critical online tool will support clinicians in identifying patients who may be struggling from the disease of addiction and help connect them with treatment services. The new system will allow doctors to view patients' medication histories and be better informed before issuing new prescriptions for controlled substances. Health care professionals will now be able to check if their patient recently had a prescription filled from other providers. The system will help physicians recognize potentially inappropriate medication use.

I would like to again thank you for the time you have afforded me today, as well as for your continued commitment to helping fight this public health crisis that is before us. I will be more than happy to take any questions that you may have.