

AACP Commitment Statement to NAM on Countering the US Opioid Epidemic

Successful solutions to the opioid crisis require multipronged, interprofessional, and interagency approaches. As essential care partners and experts in evidence-based pharmacotherapy to treat and manage patient pain as well as address opioid use disorder, pharmacist engagement in the opioid crisis is essential. The American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy (AACP), the national organization representing pharmacy education in the United States, has been an early adopter in addressing the needs for pharmacist training in addiction medicine, as evidenced by publications as early as 1991 that detailed the Curricular Guidelines for Pharmacy Education: Substance Abuse and Addictive Disease (AJPE. 55:311-16. Winter 1991.) AACP continues to update these recommendations according to the changing trends and landscape of substance use impacting patients. Pharmacy is the third largest health profession – after nursing and medicine – with more than 300,000 clinicians practicing in community pharmacies, hospitals and other healthcare settings. The mission of AACP is to lead and partner with its members in advancing pharmacy education, research, scholarship, practice and service to improve societal health. With the emergence of prescription and illicit opioids as a significant public health concern over the past decades, the profession of pharmacy has increased the support of pharmacists and pharmacy staff in roles to address opioid use and misuse. These roles include serving as a valuable resource for safe opioid prescribing practices, providing education on effective pain management, including alternatives to opioids when appropriate, increasing access to medication assisted treatment, disseminating overdose prevention and harm reduction strategies, and promoting proper drug disposal.

AACP believes pharmacists play a crucial role in addressing the opioid crisis and recognizes that pharmacists' efforts can achieve the desired core components of community engagement consistent with AACP's Strategic Plan (AJPE. 81(8): Article S10. 2017.) In 2016, the AACP Board of Directors produced a policy statement urging colleges and schools of pharmacy to commit to actions aimed at reducing harm to public health from opioid misuse through teaching, research and patient-centered, team-based care. In January 2018, AACP joined 10 other pharmacy organizations in the National Conference of Pharmaceutical Organizations (NCPO) to release a statement to demonstrate their commitment to immediate action in response to the report from the President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis. In 2018, AACP performed an environmental scan to learn more about current opioid-related initiatives in academic pharmacy and to inform the pharmacy profession and other stakeholders about these efforts (AACP <https://www.aacp.org/opioid>.) More than 100 schools reported activities, in areas related to education, service, research, practice and advocacy (AACP <https://www.aacp.org/sites/default/files/2019-02/opioid-activities-data-executive-summary.pdf>.)

As the urgency of the opioid crisis continues to embolden pharmacists to rise to action, AACP will continue to support and share knowledge as it pertains to the advancement of pharmacy education, training, and practice in mitigating the consequences stemming from the crisis. AACP will continue to support pharmacists and pharmacy educators who – with community partners and other health care providers across the nation – seek to build sustainable solutions.