



ACR Commitment Statement on Countering the US Opioid Epidemic

Opioids account for two of every three lethal drug overdoses in the U.S., leading to nearly 50,000 deaths in 2017 alone according to the Centers for Disease and Control Prevention (CDC). The American College of Radiology (ACR) is committed to countering this epidemic, and has joined the National Academy of Medicine, the American Medical Association, and more than 55 other institutions in a multidisciplinary, national campaign: the Action Collaborative on Countering the U.S. Opioid Epidemic.

The Action Collaborative identifies four specific focus areas designed to direct its members' efforts to forcefully impact the opioid crisis: 1) Health professional education and training, 2) Opioid prescribing guidelines and evidence standards, 3) Prevention, treatment, and recovery, and 4) Research, data, and metrics. These efforts are fully congruent with the ACR's mission – to serve patients and society through the empowerment of its members in advancing the practice, science, and professions of radiological care.

The ACR is committed to supporting its members as they pursue academic, logistical, clinical, and policy efforts in line with these focus areas, including analysis of current prescribing patterns, education regarding the causes and sustaining forces of the epidemic, and elucidation of potential points of intervention through the practices of radiology and radiation oncology. Successful, safe management of a patient's pain is a critical element of patient-centered care.

In addition to the careful prescribing of opioids, consideration must be given to the use of appropriate non-pharmacologic interventions that reduce or even eliminate pain, such as image-guided interventional procedures and the use of therapeutic radiation. Specifically, the CDC has clearly identified strategies to reduce exposure to opioids as a priority effort to counter the crisis, including development and implementation of alternative treatments. ACR members are uniquely suited to develop innovative, image-guided treatment alternatives to opioid prescribing, including therapeutic radiation for malignant disease and radiologic interventions that address numerous oncologic and non-oncologic causes of pain. In addition, the ACR actively supports the research, translation, and integration of these solutions into care delivery models.

The ACR embodies 40,326 accredited medical imaging and radiation oncology facilities, 54 chapters, and more than 38,000 members. Through already existing mechanisms – such as the ACR's peer-reviewed academic journal, national data registry, established support communication and alignment network (R-SCAN), Data Science Institute, ACR Education Center, Center for Research and Innovation, and Harvey L. Nieman Health Policy Institute – the ACR will contribute to the Action Collaborative by impacting practice management, clinical models of care, health services, research, policy, and education. The ACR will continue to leverage these resources toward ending the opioid crisis.