

Johns Hopkins School of Nursing
Statement to the National Academy of Medicine
Countering the U.S. Opioid Epidemic
Spring 2019

As a leading school of nursing, The Johns Hopkins School of Nursing (JHSON) is committed to partnering with the Johns Hopkins Schools of medicine and public health, the Johns Hopkins Health System, Baltimore City government, community leaders, and grassroots organizations to tackle the opioid epidemic in Baltimore, and serve as a national resource to communities around the country. Together this group will work to decrease addiction and overdose deaths with the vision of: 1) community led efforts to identify and implement strategies that will best meet the needs of East Baltimore in combating the opioid overdose epidemic; 2) optimizing education, prevention and treatment related to opioid use disorder in all education and treatment settings; and 3) supporting efforts in evidenced-based policy engagement at Johns Hopkins, and at the local and national levels. Specifically, these efforts will include upgrades to clinical services, enhancement of training, the development of a network of high quality addiction treatment in the community, the hiring of peers by community organizations, and a series of discussions about needed efforts for sustainable prevention and recovery.

Nurses comprise the largest percentage of the healthcare workforce, with the majority of their work on the ground in hospital and community health settings. This gives nursing a unique and powerful position to address stigma, to expand access to effective treatment, to coordinate care, and to manage pain and reduce harm for people with opioid use disorder. Therefore, it is critical that our school, and other schools of nursing, prepare highly skilled and compassionate graduates, capable of leading the nursing profession's response to the opioid epidemic. For example, it is widely recognized that there are gaps in medical and nursing education related to the treatment of chronic pain, understanding of addiction, and skills to care for individuals with substance use disorders. Working with the JHU School of Medicine, JHSON can play a leadership role in developing innovative curricula and concrete expectations for training the current and future healthcare workforce in these critical domains.

Success will not be achieved in countering the U.S. opioid epidemic unless there is a comprehensive, integrated, interprofessional health team approach (physicians, nurses, public health practitioners, pharmacists, psychiatrists, social workers, counselors, etc.) – in collaboration with community partners – that addresses the entire continuum of opioid use to dependence, including prevention, intervention, treatment and recover supports to this population. Collectively, through evidenced-based practice and policy, we must end this epidemic which has so profoundly crippled the health and socio-economics of our nation.