

Action Collaborative on Countering the U.S. Opioid Epidemic

Position Statement, April 2019

The Opioid Epidemic is one of the most urgent and complex challenges faced by healthcare today. As an institution dedicated to the educating of medical students, physicians, and biomedical scientists, providing patient-centered care, and conducting innovative research, McGovern Medical School is fully committed to providing a comprehensive and collaborative response to this critical healthcare need in the population of Texas and beyond.

In order to prepare future physicians to address the challenges of the Opioid Epidemic, McGovern Medical School uses an interdepartmental approach to provide an early and recurrent emphasis on opioid education and a longitudinal competency-based curriculum across the four years of medical school education. Medical students receive high-fidelity simulation training in the use of opioids for acute pain and in naloxone treatment for opioid overdose. Residents, fellows, practicing physicians, and other healthcare professionals receive continued training using learning modalities informed by translational research to equip clinicians to incorporate the latest evidence-based strategies for pain management and assessment of addiction in the clinical care of patients. Future trainees will receive education in the use of medication-assisted treatment (MAT) through an opioid educational grant provided by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

McGovern Medical School engages our community to provide compassionate care of opioid addiction and overdose through multiple interprofessional clinical programs which provide community awareness education, naloxone distribution to first responders, and emergency department same-day buprenorphine/naloxone induction. Outpatient programs include the Innovations Addiction Treatment Clinic, and provide comprehensive evaluation and management of addiction utilizing MAT, behavioral therapy, peer recovery, and individualized recovery plans.

Our departments are engaged in multiple research endeavors to disseminate scholarship on evidenced-based opioid prescribing guidelines and evidence standards, including the Houston Emergency Opioid Engagement System (HEROES) and Multi-modal Analgesic Strategies for Trauma (MAST) trial. These initiatives and other efforts throughout the institution are working to contribute to health policy research, analyze national data on opioid treatments and outcomes, develop opioid-minimizing multi-modal pain therapy guidelines in trauma patients and an opioid risk tool to predict patients at risk for addiction, and guide management practices in the treatment of chronic pain and addiction and monitoring of prescribing of controlled substances. Our faculty members provide leadership to the national response to the Opioid Epidemic by serving on opioid initiatives through the Opioid Response Network, the American Board of Medical Specialties, the American Society of Addiction Medicine, The Joint Commission, the Society for Academic Emergency Medicine, and the Association of American Medical Colleges.

These ongoing activities demonstrate the commitment of McGovern Medical School to countering the U.S. opioid epidemic. McGovern Medical School is proud to become part of this Action Collaborative and will continue to provide leadership in this area through research, education, and patient care.