

## Kaiser Permanente Commitment Statement on Countering the U.S. Opioid Epidemic

Opioid misuse and addiction is a national crisis, with more than 1,000 people being treated in emergency rooms every day for improper use of prescription opioids. Kaiser Permanente, the nation's largest private integrated health care system, has been actively addressing the crisis using a comprehensive approach that encompasses clinician education and support, community protection, patient safety, and patient education. From 2011 to 2017, we have had a 40 percent reduction in overall morphine milligram equivalents prescribed. To continue this effort, we pledge our commitment to working with the National Academy of Medicine and other Action Collaborative partners to develop patient-centered, evidence-based, effective solutions to end this public health epidemic while providing safe, appropriate care for patients with pain.

Kaiser Permanente has developed the [\*Four-Pronged Approach to Safety\*](#). The initiative's focus areas are advanced and supported by components such as telehealth, pain communication, thought leadership, program innovation, and our patient-focused, integrated care model.

Kaiser Permanente is committed to addressing the dependence and/or addiction to controlled substances. Our physicians and clinicians prescribe safe opioid treatments – and non-opioid therapies, when appropriate – to improve the health of the patients and communities we serve. We are acutely aware of problematic prescribing patterns, such as multiple and dangerous drug combinations and escalating opioid doses. Our researchers have been working to move forward the fields of pain management and opioid use disorder and to contribute generalizable knowledge to improve the lives and well-being of people with pain.

To help solve the opioid epidemic responsibly, we have several recommendations that strive to strike the right balance in addressing this issue. Some of these recommendations include:

- avoiding new opioid dependence,
- discussing risk versus benefits of opioids and the expectation of opioid therapy,
- avoiding polypharmacy with opioids,
- helping people on high doses of opioids to taper safely while offering support and a personalized care plan,
- screening appropriately for the presence of risk factors, such as alcohol dependence or presence of children.

Kaiser Permanente looks forward to participating in this Collaborative and joining our partners in developing, sharing, and spreading best practices to help solve the national opioid crisis.