

Stanford Medicine Commitment Statement on Countering the U.S. Opioid Epidemic

More than 200,000 people died from opioid pain relievers between 1999 and 2017, and nearly one-quarter of those happened in 2017 alone. Today, more than 11 million Americans misuse prescription opioids, and more than 2 million Americans are addicted. Stanford Medicine wishes to make visible its commitment to reversing this disturbing trend as part of the National Academy of Medicine's Action Collaborative on Countering the U.S. Opioid Epidemic.

With efforts spanning its tripartite mission of research, education, and patient care, Stanford Medicine is dedicated to developing evidence-based solutions focused on predicting and preventing opioid misuse as well as providing new and effective ways to help patients recover from addiction.

Through research, Stanford Medicine is improving the understanding of this epidemic and identifying the efficacy of high-tech, high-touch solutions. For example, to reduce chronic inappropriate opioid use, Stanford researchers have created Precision Health models that predict who are most likely to abuse opioids and are researching innovative non-opioid means of reducing pain—including transcranial magnetic stimulation, mind-body therapies, and interdisciplinary team-based pain management approaches.

Additionally, an ongoing study is examining the benefits to people with chronic opioid use of a personalized taper plan, regular clinic follow-ups, and access to classes with psychologists and peers. And an open source platform, created by Stanford in partnership with the NIH and used at academic sites across the U.S. as well as Canada and Israel, is building an international registry of data from patients suffering chronic pain to optimize pain management and reduce opioid use.

Stanford Medicine also trains the clinicians of today and tomorrow on opioid safety. For example, its medical students must complete a curriculum dedicated to safe prescribing. Other efforts include a post-graduate training program centered on treating addiction and creating leaders in the field. To have a broader impact in opioid education, Stanford Medicine also offers a free online CME program for practicing physicians that addresses prescription drug misuse and tapering patients off of opioids.

In patient care, opioid reduction and high-touch care are priorities. Stanford Medicine's safe prescribing program, for one, includes an opioid reduction strategy as well as patient education and support classes. Additionally, data about individual patient's physical, psychological, and social functioning gives clinicians insights into how to best reduce opioid use and to provide targeted treatments for those who are opioid-dependent. Beyond these downstream solutions, Stanford Medicine has an outpatient addiction medicine clinic and a newly launched inpatient addiction medicine consult service to help patients with an addiction problem. On the near horizon is a youth addiction initiative dedicated to preventing and treating substance use problems in teens.

Through innovative research, foundational and professional education of clinicians, and proactive patient care, Stanford Medicine is committed to continuing initiatives such as these and joining this national movement to reverse the trends of the U.S. the opioid epidemic.