

Saint Thomas Health (STH), based in Nashville, is a system of nine hospitals within Middle Tennessee. Saint Thomas is applying to be a network partner with the NAM Action Collaborative on Countering the U.S. Opioid Epidemic.

Since 2017 STH has actively worked on three of the NAM Action Collaborative focus areas. With regard to the focus on professional education STH has incorporated discussions about opioid use and prescribing protocols during hospital grand rounds and resident education conferences. STH has specifically targeted clinician education and distributed non-narcotic pain alternative pocket cards that are used daily by physicians and residents. In the last year, these initiatives have resulted in a 60% decrease in morphine milligram equivalents prescribed through STH EDs. STH has also focused on opioid prescribing practices and evidence-based practices and has placed ED order sets in the EHR to assist physicians with opioid-alternative pain management processes. Case Management has identified ED superusers to assist those with chronic pain medication needs and create appropriate outpatient follow up options.

To focus on recovery STH has utilized a peer navigator support system. STH is partnering with a local provider to provide referral and resources with a “warm handoff” from the ED and/or inpatient service. Additionally, WECARE is a community initiative that is pairing community resources with hospitals and opioid-addicted patients. One of the STH hospitals is working with WECARE to connect resources to prevent, treat and help individuals recover from substance use disorder. WECARE goals are to decrease the stigma associated with opioid addiction across all aspects of the community, break down barriers in the community to recruit resources, and to offer appropriate care including medically assisted treatment.

The first drug “take back day” for STH hospitals is scheduled for April of 2019. Future goals for STH include working as a network partner to share our evidence-based protocols and processes, to enact more adaptations, and to implement other successful tools and approaches. Furthermore, STH clinicians are committed to continued reduction of opioid prescribing and keeping opioid naïve patients NAÏVE thru patient education and alternative recommendations for treatment of pain.