

Wisconsin Public Health Association

2014 RESOLUTION

Providing and Mobilizing Public Health Leadership to Address Prescription Drug and Heroin Addiction

Knowing that addiction is a physical problem and the U. S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention state: "Prescription drug abuse is an epidemic. Throughout the nation it is a growing problem with no signs of slowing down" (1)(2);

Knowing that the United States makes up only 4.6 percent of the world's population, but consumes 80 percent of the world prescription opioids, and 99 percent of the world's hydrocodone, which is the opioid that is in Vicodin (3);

Knowing that over 20 percent of Wisconsin high school students report using a prescription drug (such as Oxycontin, Percocet, Vicodin, Adderall, Ritalin, or Xanax) without a prescription (4) and, over 5.5 million prescriptions a month are dispensed in the state of Wisconsin and 20 percent of those medications are schedule II controlled substances with Vicodin (hydrocodone/acetaminophen) being the most prescribed of all medication in Wisconsin (4)(5);

Believing that effective public policy coupled with aligned policies and systems can improve and protect health; and, by stepping forward into the policy arena, Wisconsin's public health system can enhance policy development because many of the elements of effective policy development are core beliefs of public health. These elements and concepts include:

- Leadership matters and calls for champions from many sectors, systems, organizations, and communities;
- Prevention saves lives and conserves resources;
- Prescribing behavior needs to change;
- Disposal opportunities should be ubiquitous and convenient in all communities;
- Wisconsin's prescription drug monitoring program must reach all nurses, physicians, and pharmacists;
- Professional education is critical;
- Accountability for community education is a shared responsibility;
- Treatment is essential;
- Data, metrics, and evaluation must drive policy and practice (6);

Recalling that the misuse of prescription drugs leads to abuse, dependence, addiction, and death and is affecting the health and safety of the people of Wisconsin and the communities where we live, grow, work, learn, and play;

Believing that there is an inextricable link between misuse, abuse, and diversion of opioid analgesics which are a gateways to heroin availability and use;

WHEREAS, preventing and stemming prescription drug abuse and outcomes of misuse call upon many systems and sectors described in *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020* who include but are not limited to: health professions, educational institutions, hospitals, Veterans Health Administration, health departments, law enforcement, courts, and civil society;

WHEREAS, intervention success is improved when targeted to populations at risk;

WHEREAS, the CDC and the Wisconsin State Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse have identified vulnerable population groups that include:

- Adolescents and young adults
- People who obtain multiple controlled substance prescriptions from multiple providers – a practice known as “doctor shopping.”
- People who take high daily dosages of prescription painkillers and those who misuse multiple abuse-prone prescription drugs.
- Low-income people and those living in rural areas.
 - People on Medicaid are prescribed painkillers at twice the rate of non-Medicaid patients and are at six times the risk of prescription painkillers overdose. One Washington State study found that 45 percent of people who died from prescription painkiller overdoses were Medicaid enrollees.
- People with mental illness and those with a history of substance abuse (7)(8).

WHEREAS, Wisconsin rural drug poisonings rose 496 percent between 2008-2012 and rose 82 percent in urban areas with rural area acute Hepatitis C virus (HCV) diagnoses rising 303 percent and urban cases rising 127 percent between 2008-2012 (9). As anyone actively engaged in public health knows Hepatitis C virus (HCV) is a disease communicated through intravenous (IV) drug use. The Wisconsin Aids Resource Center needle exchange program dispensed over 1 million needles to IV drug users in 2010; 1.5 million needles in 2011; and over 2 million needles in 2012 (10);

WHEREAS, collaborative leadership from Wisconsin’s public health system is desperately needed to work as a strong partner to the mental health community, human service organizations, alcohol and drug abuse community, and others;

WHEREAS, state and local health departments carry out core functions and community health improvement plans that can provide the methods to preventing and solving current and emerging problems associated with the prescription drug abuse / heroin epidemic in Wisconsin;

WHEREAS, the Wisconsin Division of Public Health and the Wisconsin Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services have successfully collaborated in the creation of *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020* and the State Health Officer is a strong partner to the Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Wisconsin Public Health Association urges the State Health Officer to build a public health response that mobilizes the statewide partners identified in Wisconsin's public health system model (11) in a coordinated and collaborative effort to stem the prescription drug abuse and heroin epidemic.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Wisconsin Public Health Association urges the Wisconsin Public Health Council to create an institutional home where health professionals, public health experts and other public health system partners and key stakeholders can come together to address this current and emerging public health issue in collaboration with the State Council of Alcohol and Drug Abuse.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Wisconsin Public Health Association supports efforts to educate the public, policy makers, and other public health system partners and key stakeholders of the importance of reducing the incidence of prescription drug and heroin abuse, especially among populations at greatest risk.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Wisconsin Public Health Association encourages state and local governments to leverage resources potentially available through the Affordable Care Act and other sources, toward effective community-based drug treatment, harm reduction, and physical and mental health services.

Approved at the WPHA Annual Business Meeting on May 13, 2014.

References:

(1) U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2010). *Unintentional drug poisonings in the United States*. Retrieved from

<http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Poisoning?brief.htm>

(2) Executive Office of the President of the United States (2011). *Epidemic: Responding to America's prescription drug abuse crisis*.

www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/ondcp/policy-and-research/rx_abuse_plan.pdf

(3) Avila, J. and Murray, M. (2011, April 20). Prescription Painkiller Use at record High for Americans. Retrieved from

abcnews.go.com/US/prescription-painkillers-record-number-americans-pain-medication/story?id=13421828

(4) State of Wisconsin. Wisconsin State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (2012).

Reducing Wisconsin's prescription drug abuse: A call to action. <http://www.scaoda.state.wi.us/>

(5) Henry J. Kaiser Foundation. (2009). Retrieved from

www.statehealthfacts.org/profileind.jsp?cmprgn=1&cat=5&rgn=51&ind=265&sub=66

(6) Combined sources:

- National Governor's Association (2014), *Reducing prescription drug abuse: Lessons learned from a NGA policy academy*. www.nga.org/cms/Rx

- State of Wisconsin. Wisconsin State Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (2012). *Reducing Wisconsin's prescription drug abuse: A call to action*. www.scaoda.state.wi.us/

- State of Wisconsin. Department of Health Services (2010). *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020: Everyone living better, longer*. <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/healthiestwisconsin2020/>

(7) CDC, *Policy Impact* (2010). *Unintentional drug poisonings in the United States*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Poisoning?brief.htm>

(8) State of Wisconsin. Wisconsin State Council on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse (2012). *Reducing Wisconsin's prescription drug abuse: A call to action*. <http://www.scaoda.state.wi.us/>

(9) Wisconsin Division of Public Health; Jon G. Meiman, MD, C. Tomaasallo: No Longer an Urban Problem: Heroin Overdoses and Deaths in Rural Wisconsin, 2008-2012

(10) Scott Stokes Wisconsin Aids Resource Center report: Head of the needle exchange program for the Wisconsin Aids Resource Center.

(11) State of Wisconsin. Department of Health Services (2010). *Healthiest Wisconsin 2020: Everyone living better, longer*. Page 46. <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/healthiestwisconsin2020/>

Additional References:

Executive Office of the President of the United States (2011). *Epidemic: Responding to America's prescription drug abuse crisis*. http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/ondcp/policy-and-research/rx_abuse_plan.pdf

Wisconsin Nurses Association (2014). Prescription Drug Abuse Task Force. Report to the Wisconsin Nurses Association Board of Directors.

Submission and Preparation:

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