



MEDICAL SOCIETY OF THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

PRESS RELEASE

Leading D.C. Medical Organization Applauds the Mayor's Strategic Plan to Reduce Opioid Use, Misuse, and Deaths

Addressing Prior Authorization for Medication Assisted Treatment is Key to Reversing Trends

Washington, D.C., January 3, 2019 – The Medical Society of the District of Columbia (MSDC), Washington, D.C.'s leading physicians group, today applauded the release of Mayor Muriel Bowser's "Live.Long.DC" plan to reduce opioid addictions and deaths in the District. In particular, MSDC is pleased to see the Mayor included the removal of prior authorization for medication assisted treatment (MAT) as one of the plan's goals.

Prior authorization of medical treatments often delays necessary patient care, making it a major issue for MSDC's 2,600-plus physician community members and the thousands of Washingtonians whom they treat each day. Goal 5, Strategy 5a of the Mayor's plan would examine "eliminate[ing] barriers to accessing MAT... including prior authorization," and "[e]stablish an on-call 24-hour consultation service for physicians prescribing MAT." Both strategies would allow District physicians seeing a patient with opioid use disorder (OUD) to more quickly prescribe treatments such as buprenorphine that have been proven effective in fighting addiction.

"We applaud the Mayor and her administration for their plan to help District residents," said Dr. Raymond Tu, MD, MS, FACR, president of MSDC. "MSDC has worked with the District Council, our members who treat OUD patients, and other stakeholders to ensure that a physician voice is heard to provide sound medical knowledge on dealing with the scourge of drug addiction in our city. We will continue to advocate for good medicine and our physicians treating District residents on these issues."

The "Live.Long.DC" plan also contains numerous other provisions that if implemented well would help physicians more easily treat OUD patients. Goal 1 includes provisions aimed at "promot[ing] improved access to MAT for individuals on Medicare with part D coverage." It also calls for commercial health insurance plans to reduce barriers for MAT and other treatment services.

MSDC will work with the Mayor's office, DC Health, the Department of Behavioral Health, the Department of Health Care Finance, and the District Council to ensure these provisions are implemented in a timely and medically-sound manner. MSDC will also work in 2019 to reduce the barrier of prior authorization for all treatments in the District. A 2017 American Medical Association survey of physicians found that 78% of respondents said prior authorization can lead patients to abandon treatment, with 30% of respondents reporting waiting between three and five days for a prescription to be approved by an insurance company.

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About the Medical Society of the District of Columbia (MSDC)

With over 2,600 members, the Medical Society of the District of Columbia is the largest medical organization representing metropolitan Washington physicians in the District of Columbia. The Medical Society was founded in 1817, and it is dedicated to ensuring the well-being of physicians and their patients in metropolitan Washington. For more information, visit msdc.org.