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Research and News Worth Repeating

July 10, 2020

Opioids Epidemic

How to reignite the fight against the nation's opioid epidemic

AMA, 6/23/20

The American Medical Association (AMA) is expressing concern that the drug overdose epidemic is worsening during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, every region of the country has reported spikes in opioid-related emergency room visits, fentanyl-related overdoses and tainted drug overdoses. COVID-19 pandemic has led to social distancing triggers: isolation and anxiety and the medical community often refers to addiction as “a disease of isolation”.

The American Medical Association (AMA) is working with federal agencies such as the DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) and SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) to help provide solutions such as increased flexibility for physicians to provide medication assisted treatment (MAT) for patients. Additional steps include new rules for using telemedicine, removing barriers for medicines for treating opioid use disorders, removing arbitrary limits or other restrictions on opioid prescribing for pain patients, and supporting harm-reduction strategies.

<https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/opioids/how-reignite-fight-against-nation-s-opioid-epidemic>

Higher doses of naloxone are needed in the synthetic opioid era

Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention and Policy, February 2019

In 2018, Surgeon General recommended the expansion of the use of naloxone, an opioid antagonist to counter the opioids epidemic. More recent rises in opioid overdose deaths have been attributed to synthetic opioids, particularly fentanyl. Due to increased use of fentanyl and fentanyl-related deaths, multiple sequential doses of naloxone have been needed for some opioid overdoses due to fentanyl. It is recommended that higher doses of naloxone are now needed to combat the new era of overdoses due to fentanyl.

<https://substanceabusepolicy.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s13011-019-0195-4>

As opioids flooded tribal lands across the U.S., overdose deaths skyrocketed

Washington Post, 6/29/2020

Nationwide, from 2006 to 2014, Native Americans were nearly 50 percent more likely to die of an opioid overdose than non-natives, a Washington Post analysis found. Opioid distributors shipped an average of 57 pills per person per year to Oklahoma from 2006 to 2014 and more than 5.4 million prescription pain pills to Jefferson County, Oklahoma—an average of 94 pills per person each year.

As a result, at least 370 Native Americans in Oklahoma overdosed and died — with a death rate roughly equivalent to that of West Virginia, federal data shows, and death rates for Native Americans is likely to be far higher because they are often mistakenly classified as white on death certificates..

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/national/investigations/native-american-opioid-overdose-deaths/>

Opioids Epidemic Continues in Midst of Pandemic, Fentanyl overdoses climb in Ohio

Cleveland 19 News, 06/26/ 2020

In the midst of the Coronavirus pandemic, the opioid epidemic has continued and fentanyl overdoses have continued to climb. Shutdowns, isolation from family members and friends and some reduced services has made it difficult for many people struggling with addiction to get sober.

<https://www.cleveland19.com/2020/06/26/opioid-epidemic-continues-midst-pandemic-fentanyl-overdoses-climb-ohio/>

Naloxone Use, Opioid Overdoses Increase Mid Virus Pandemic

WFYI, 5/29/2020

In recent months, there has been a 35% statewide increase in naloxone use in Indiana from last year and a 95% increase in Clark County, Indiana. Naloxone is used to quickly block the effects of opioid overdoses. Naloxone was used 1,306 times in April the highest month for usage in the state's history.

Dr. Eric Yazel believes that stress related to the effects of the pandemic could be why there has been such an increase in overdoses. Isolation, economic hardship and housing and food instability are other factors that may be contributing to increased stress.

<https://apnews.com/7ea5005ed2a5ed7fe7adf6bc8f50a2fc>

Amid Pandemic, Virginia Hospital's Opioid Overdoses Up Nearly 10-Fold

MedScape, 7/07/2020

The coronavirus pandemic is sparking a severe medical crisis among drug users. In a Virginia Emergency Department, opioid overdoses shot up 10-fold.

What's clear is that medical and public health professionals alike need to spread awareness about the issue in the community and offer resources for those who may need help.

<https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/933530>

Substance Abuse & Mental Health Alternatives

Yoga may ease symptoms of depression, study says

CNN, 05/18/2020

A study published in the British Journal of Sports Medicine, conducted in the United States, India, Japan, China, Germany and Sweden, found that yoga helped ease symptoms of depression, and more yoga had greater effects. As a form of exercise, yoga has helps increase circulation in the brain, which regulates psychological factors such as motivation and response to stress.

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/18/health/yoga-mental-health-wellness/index.html>

Trauma-informed Educational Yoga Program for Teens as Addiction Prevention Tool

World Medical and Health Policy, March 3rd, 2020

Experience of trauma early in life can have long-term effects and leads to a cascade of biological changes and stress responses and is highly associated with substance abuse disorders. NIDA has found that 9 out of 10 of those who meet criteria for substance use disorder (SUD) began using substance before the age of 18.

Thus, it is beneficial to look into mind-body connections and practices such as yoga than help alleviate mental, spiritual and emotional stress. It is particularly empowering to help provide ease, calm, health, and joy back into young lives. Numerous studies have supported trauma-informed yoga as a treatment for trauma.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/wmh3.326>

Strengthening partnerships between substance use researchers and policy makers to take advantage of a window of opportunity

Substance Abuse Treatment, Prevention and Policy, March 2019

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) has identified key gaps in research-to-practice in the implementation of prevention and treatment of substance use disorder (SUD), based on interviews with 18 policy makers involved in the delivery of health services. Actionable steps for closing those gaps include: 1) partnering with policy makers early in the research process, 2) formulating research designs to

meet strategic goals 3) systematically testing alternative phrasing of scientific terminology that allow users to better understand and repurpose data.

Evidence based treatment are still highly underutilized, and it is imperative that with their overwhelming economic and health benefits that researchers begin to strengthen both partnerships and their use.

<https://substanceabusepolicy.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s13011-019-0199-0>

Senators Seek Telehealth Expansion for Substance Abuse Treatment

Health Intelligence, 07/06/2020

A new bill has been introduced in the U.S. Senate, the Telehealth Response for E-prescribing Addiction Therapy Services (TREATS) Act would make permanent certain emergency actions to boost telehealth access for substance use disorder (SUD). The bill will allow providers to skip the in-person exam requirement and provide MAT (Medicated Assisted Treatment) therapy to substance abuse clients via connected health. It would also expand Medicare coverage for mHealth Services.

<https://mhealthintelligence.com/news/senators-seek-telehealth-expansion-for-substance-abuse-treatment>