

# Medication-Assisted Treatment: Putting the Brakes on Addiction

Ohio Association of  
COUNTY  
BEHAVIORAL  
HEALTH  
AUTHORITIES

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OF  MIND

## Ohio's Prevention and Treatment Field Studies Best Response to Opiates and other Alcohol/Drug Addiction

Ohio's addiction prevention and treatment services professionals came together to look at best practices in helping men, women, and adolescents to overcome addiction and maintain a long-term recovery. Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) for people with addiction disease improves the success of long-term treatment and recovery, but for a number of reasons many Ohioans do not have access to MAT or any other kind of treatment in some parts of the state.

The Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities (OACBHA) hosted a conference for nearly 300 professionals that focused on medication-assisted treatment and the best ways to finance and use MAT to supplement traditional therapies for addiction treatment. Other sponsors of the event were Reckitt Benckiser, the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services, Summa Health Systems, and Alkermes.

According to the Ohio Department of Health, 3.6 people are dying every day in Ohio from overdose deaths. Some of Ohio's addiction treatment centers have seen increases by as much as 800 percent in the need for treatment for opiate addiction. Agencies that saw less than 5 percent of their clients for opiate addiction just 5-10 years ago are now seeing up to 80 percent of their clients needing treatment for opiate abuse. How the state can address this tidal wave of addiction treatment need was the subject of the recent statewide conference in Columbus.

Medication-Assisted Treatment can make the client more comfortable so that treatment can result in long-term recovery. Ohio's County Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Boards and treatment service providers are committed to ensuring that our citizens have the best opportunity for recovery, including safe housing, jobs, and other basic living needs. This conference opened a new avenue to support that recovery.

Dr. Ted Parran of Case Western Reserve University offered the general session remarks. "The challenge for us in Ohio is to educate our communities, and to get good at screening (for addiction/alcoholism) so that we find it earlier – before people have blown through their third marriages and lost their jobs."

Representing the federal Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) under the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration was Medical Officer Anthony Campbell, RPh, DO, a graduate of Ohio University. "Our goal is to improve health by bringing effective alcohol and drug treatment to every community. We are working to ensure that science, rather than ideology, forms the foundation for the Nation's addiction treatment system."

In December 2009, OACBHA did a statewide scientifically valid survey that showed that 96 percent of Ohioans believe that a person with addiction or alcoholism who completes treatment can become a productive citizen. Conversely, 43.5 percent said they believe that alcoholism and addiction are weaknesses in character.

This kind of education is important so that all Ohioans and our policymakers understand that 'Treatment works, and people recover.' This is based on science, not on prejudice towards people who are sick and need treatment – just like a diabetic or cancer patient needs treatment to get well.



Dr. Ted Parran addresses the crowd at the recent MAT conference in Columbus.

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## Access and Addiction

Cheri L. Walter, CEO  
Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities

The statistics are astounding. We have an epidemic. This is a profound public health concern.

Lately, we've been hearing a great deal about the many problems related to drug abuse. I for one am happy to see that this issue is finally getting the attention it deserves. For years, we have watched the trends for prescription drug abuse, drug-related crimes, and accidental overdoses rise. It's time that we take action to raise the awareness about this issue and provide the education necessary to curb the abuse of alcohol and other drugs.

However, education, awareness and public policy initiatives likely won't be enough to change peoples' attitudes and opinions about using and abusing alcohol and other drugs. In a recent statistically significant poll conducted by the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities as part of the OF-1-MIND Campaign, we asked Ohioans, "what is the most serious drug problem in your community?" The responses, while not surprising, were very enlightening: Alcohol 38.6%, Prescription Drugs 22.0%, Marijuana 11.6%, Crack Cocaine 9.4%, Methamphetamine 9.4%, Heroin 5.8%, and Cocaine 3.3%. The number one and number two drug problems were alcohol and prescription drugs, both legal.

Now, I don't know about you, but to me this is problematic. In communities across Ohio, whether they are urban, rural or suburban and regardless of race, gender and education people are abusing alcohol and prescription drugs. These items are legal, often times they are inexpensive, and they aren't hard to come by. I believe in general this means it's all about access, and until we help people learn how to deal with stress, feeling bad about themselves, etc, many people will look for a chemical alternative and abuse something.

So while changing public policies, raising awareness and providing education about the dangers of abusing alcohol and other drugs are great steps towards changing the trends we are seeing, they are not the only steps that we need to take. We also need to address the issues of stress, depression, anxiety and other personal issues that so often cause people to look for that outlet and seek a means to escape from their reality. We need to educate people about how to deal with their stressors in a way that is not so dangerous to their health and the health of those around them.

Additionally, we need to remain vigilant in our fight against stigma. Every day, stigma about alcohol, drug addiction and mental illness drives people away from the help they so desperately need. We know that **treatment works and people recover** so we must continue our fight to spread the message so that we can reach the point where every individual in need seeks and receives the treatment that will help them recover.



## Prescription Drug Overdose Action Group Submits Recommendations

On April 6th, Ohio's statewide Prescription Drug Overdose Action Group submitted a set of recommendations to reduce and prevent the misuse and abuse of prescription drugs. The recommendations from the Ohio Poison Action Group New and Emerging Drug Trends Work Group were submitted to the offices of Alvin D. Jackson MD, Director of the Ohio Department of Health and Angela Cornelius Dawson, Director of the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services. The recommendations provide potential solutions for consumers, prescribers, legislators and researchers. The recommendations from the group are as follows:

### **Increase public awareness of the problem**

The group recommends several strategies to increase the awareness about the problem including the establishment of local and regional task forces, the development and funding of social marketing campaigns, the promotion of population specific education, the development and promotion of multiple and widespread training programs, and the conduction of proper prescription drug storage and disposal programs. Each of these actions is designed to provide the public with information about the prescription drug problems in communities throughout Ohio. These ideas will work to arm communities with the information and tools necessary to combat the problems in their communities.

### **Provide health care professionals with information, training and materials to address the prevention of misuse/abuse of and unintentional deaths from prescription drugs**

The group presents several ideas for recommendation. The first is to engage health care and allied medical professional organizations and state boards to initiate education campaigns for their members regarding the problems of unintentional overdose deaths due to misuse/abuse of prescription drugs, particularly prescription opioids. The second is to develop a tool-kit for use by health care providers to educate all patients being prescribed pain medication. The third is to adopt a Screening Brief Intervention Referral for Treatment (SBIRT) protocol within health care and workplace settings. The fourth is to require course work in substance use disorders, prevention and treatment in college curriculum for any medical professional or allied health care degree. The fifth is to convene a state forum and/or task force to identify evidence based approaches to support and improve treatment for opioid addiction including medication-assisted treatment.

### **Implement policy and legislative changes designed to prevent misuse/abuse and unintentional deaths from prescription drugs**

The group recommends that the state initiate and support efforts to increase the capacity for treatment for opioid addiction including medication-assisted treatment, enact legislation for licensing standards for pain management clinics, and institute mandatory continuing education credits in pain medication management for health care professionals for licensure renewal. The group also recommends that the state enact legislation to require all physicians and other prescribers to register with and use the state's prescription monitoring program, enact legislation to implement

E-prescribing in Ohio, enact rules that would allow for reimbursement of SBIRT by Medicaid, ensure the development and implementation of pain management guidelines in all health care systems, enact 911 Good Samaritan Immunity laws that legalize the use of naloxone by lay persons when someone has overdosed and protect them from prosecution, and increase the use of "Drug Courts" as an alternative to incarceration for illegal use/abuse of prescription drugs.

### **Increase, improve and coordinate data collection related to the prevention of unintentional deaths from prescription drug overdoses**

The group recommends that the state improve linkage of data systems among state agencies, establish collaboration with other states in regards to drug monitoring systems, establish poison death review committees, increase the capacity of coroners for data collection, and conduct a study to assess treatment access throughout Ohio.

### ***Ohio Prescription Drug Abuse Task Force***

On April 2nd Governor Strickland issued an executive order to establish a task force to establish a more comprehensive, coordinated approach to combating prescription drug abuse across Ohio. The Ohio Prescription Drug Abuse Task Force will be charged with researching the issue and identifying public health, law enforcement, legislative and additional strategies to reduce the danger of prescription drug abuse in Ohio. The Task Force will utilize the recommendations from the Prescription Drug Overdose Action Group, as well as recommendations from other federal, state, and local groups as a foundation for developing strategies to curb prescription drug abuse.

## Why It Matters

- 38.6% of Ohioans believe that alcohol is the most serious drug problem in their community followed by prescription drugs at 22.0%. (OACBHA)
- In 2007, unintentional drug poisoning became the leading cause of injury death in Ohio, surpassing motor vehicle crashes and suicide for the first time on record. This trend continued in 2008. (Ohio Department of Health)
- From 1999 to 2008, Ohio's death rate due to unintentional *drug poisonings* increased 350 percent, and the increase in deaths has been driving largely by prescription drug overdoses. In Ohio, there were 327 fatal unintentional drug overdoses in 1999 growing to 1,472 annual deaths in 2008. (Ohio Department of Health)
- On average, from 2006 to 2008, approximately 4 people died each day in Ohio due to drug-related poisoning. (Ohio Hospital Association)
- In addition to tragic loss of human life, drug overdoses are associated with high direct and indirect costs. Unintentional fatal poisonings cost Ohioans \$3.5 billion on average each year; while non-fatal, hospital-admitted poisonings cost an additional \$3.9 million. These costs include medical, work loss and quality of life loss. (Ohio Department of Health)

## What You Can Do

- Work to educate yourself and others that substance abuse is preventable, addiction is treatable and people recover.
- Work with local partners to implement social marketing campaigns to educate the public about alcohol and drug abuse and misuse.
- Properly monitor, secure and dispose of prescription and over the counter medications in your home.
- Support and participate in community prescription drug storage and disposal programs.



- Talk with your kids, friends, and neighbors and consider making a presentation to a rotary, PTA, civic association or other groups about this issue.
- Support community campaigns that are working to eradicate the stigma related to alcohol, drug addiction, and mental illness.
- Work with your local alcohol, drug addiction, and mental health board to educate your community about alcohol and drug abuse and addiction.
- Join the OF-1-MIND campaign and help us as we work to educate Ohioans to become advocates in the fight to end stigma and discrimination - [www.of-1-mind.org](http://www.of-1-mind.org).

## Treatment Works...People Recover