



Opioids: Combating the Crisis

Background

Communities across the state are experiencing an opioid crisis. To address the crisis, WSHA in collaboration with the Washington State Medical Association (WSMA) and the state Department of Health advanced legislation in both the 2016 and 2017 legislative sessions. The laws established new guidelines for opioid prescribing, increased access to the state's prescription drug monitoring program (PMP) and provided information to stop overdose deaths. While additional work remains to increase access to treatment for those struggling with opioid use disorder, as a state, we should make sure that any new laws and requirements take in to account that much of this work is currently in progress, and time and resources are needed to fully implement the new rules.

WSHA Position

We strongly support efforts to expand access to non-opioid interventions for pain treatment and enhancements to the PMP with interstate data sharing. Access to non-opioid interventions for pain treatment would better address patient needs while reducing the risk of substance use disorder.

We oppose legislative efforts that would establish pill count limits and mandate providers to check the PMP – they ignore the work under HB 1427 passed in 2017, and the recent prescribing rules implemented by state boards and commissions. We also oppose rigid PMP and electronic medical record (EMR) integration requirements as they ignore local challenges and fail to consider that many EMR vendors do not offer integration options. Many hospitals have already integrated and are in the process of integration; for those remaining, focusing on addressing the challenges to integration would be a more effective approach, rather than a mandate.

Key Messages

- Combatting the opioid crisis is a top priority for WSHA.
- Patients need access to non-opioid therapies to help treat pain and reduce the risk of substance use disorder. For example, Medicaid currently does not pay for physical therapy.
- This fall, several boards and commissions adopted opioid prescribing rules, which hospitals and health care entities are now in the midst of implementing.
- In an effort to reduce opioid prescribing, WSHA and our partners are giving reports on individual prescribing rates to hospitals/health systems and large provider groups. To date, we have over 18,000 providers participating, and we are actively recruiting more.
- Hospitals and providers want PMP data integrated in their EMR, but integration needs to be done in a way that works with existing IT systems and has appropriate support and fiscal resources.

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