

**California Opioid Epidemic**  
**A Suggestion for Policy Reform and Program**  
**Implementation**

## Background

Opioids are chemical substances that bind with the opioid receptors and produce morphine like symptoms and effects. Opioids are often called narcotics. Mainly opioids are used to treat pain or act as an analgesic or anesthetic. There are also other uses like suppressing diarrhea, suppressing cough. Some side effects of opioid are itchiness, sedation, nausea, respiratory depression and constipation (Rudd, 2016). Some signs of opioids overdose – person's face is extremely pale. The body goes limp, lips and fingernails turn blue or purple, vomiting, unable to speak, breathing and heart rate slows down. An overdose can cause death from respiratory depression. Opioids are class of drugs such as heroin, fentanyl, oxycodone (Percocet), hydrocodone (Vicodin), codeine, morphine (Avinza), oxymorphone (Opana), etc. In many areas in the US, opioid and its dependency have led to deaths of many and thus it became an epidemic. It is a very addictive substance. Addiction is a chronic brain disease that forces a person to continuously seek drugs. In 2013 40 million people of the global population used opioids illegally. In 2014, million people in the USA are opioid addictive. In 2016 in USA opioid has resulted in deaths 1.7 in every 10,000 people (Wilkerson, Kim & Mareiniss, 2016). California in USA opioid has become a serious epidemic and concern and several measures should be taken to prevent a disastrous situation. In 2017 there are 2,196 opioid-related deaths in the USA, California most of these are prescription related overdose (Dart *et al.* 2015). Nearly 42,000 deaths have occurred of opioid misuse in the USA in 2016. Opioid misuse during pregnancy causes neonatal abstinence syndrome which can lead to miscarriage or abnormal child. Fault in prescription is leading to an increase in opioid abuse. In 1990s pharmaceutical companies assured that patients will not become addictive to opioids and mention the prescribers to prescribe them without any risk (Cicero & Ellis, 2015). Due to increase in prescription, it leads to drug abuse and misuse in huge quantity, this assures that all types of opioids have addictive properties. In 2017, HHS declared a public health emergency regarding opioid misuse and announced five-point strategies to combat and effectively fight against the opioid crisis-

- Better access to treatment
- Promotion of overdose-reversing drug
- Public health surveillance

- Support for research and find alternatives for pain
- Better pain management

US health department has created a program to reach statewide overarching strategy includes five main components: 1) Safe Prescribing; 2) Access to Treatment; 3) Naloxone Distribution; 4) Public Education Campaign; and 5) Data Informed/Driven Interventions. Medical prescribers and practitioners must maintain the regulations and implement the strategy and consult the patients to not misuse the opioid (Seth, Rude & Bacon, 2018). The big pharmaceutical companies should also take measures and should stop the manufacturing of different opioid substances and they should think about the alternatives of pain relievers. The Health department should also regulate the big pharmaceutical companies so that they do not opioid substances.

As opioid misuse or abuse has become a serious problem not only in America but throughout the world, this paper will analyze the effectiveness of the current California opioid and implement and stage programs and research ways to strengthen efforts using the vector model described in an article by American Public Health Association written by Dr. Dasgupta, Dr. Beletsky and Dr. Ciccarone.

## **Rationale**

### **Need for identification of the substance use**

Dependency on an opioid is becoming essential for the authorities in order to ensure that the lifestyles of people are of a quality (Friedmann *et al.*, 2018). Drugs are used for various medical purposes but at the same time, it is even used for the recreational and addictive purpose. This is what the government needs to understand in order to create better utilization of these hard drugs. The process of circulation of these drugs needs to be monitored in order to create better health management of the mass of a country. Educations training for not using these substances among youth are very much essential for a nation in order to create better safeguard of the future health conditions of people. In many parts of the US, opioid and its dependency have led to deaths of many and thus it became an epidemic.

As per the report of Vox (2019), there was a death numbering 70, 000 in the year 2017. Out of these deaths, two-thirds of the people were involved in the addiction of opioids. This shows that

it is essential for the government of the state to identify the sources that are making these substances available to the public and supporting their dependency in order to create better monitoring and circulation of these substances. The need for education support for the use of these substances among the public is increasing at a faster pace, which can furthermore help the people from being affected out of these addictions. Another thing that the government needs to keep in mind is that the women those are pregnant need to understand the degree of consumption level of this substance, which is creating the death of premature babies in the long run. Another thing is that their dependencies on these substances need to be monitored in order to create a secured future to the recent born (Brogly *et al.*, 2017).

### **Need for regulations regarding opioid consumptions**

In the present scenario, opioids and its consumptions are increasing rapidly even after practicing and development of various laws for its regulations (Schore, 2015). The levels of consumptions are increasing on a daily basis. The number of deaths because of overuse of this substance and especially heroin are even increasing, which need to be monitored in order to create better welfare of the society. In order to create a better understanding of the ways these substances should be used, the need for regulations is becoming mandatory. With the prescript support even the people and their death rates are increasing and this is what the government need to look after in order to create better circulation and use of these substances. Minors and teenagers are becoming the primary victims of this substance overuse, which is creating a threat to the nation as a whole, which need to be addressed in order to create a secured society in the future. It is essential for the government to take care of the circulation and even the standard of this medicine, which can both hinder and foster the medical condition of people. It is essential for the suppliers of these substances that they are circulated to the clinics and are not sold to other people for their own profits.

Opioids are used for the treatment of pains in humans and it is essential for the medical practitioners to create proper use of these substances within their medical boundaries for the treatment of their patients. It is relevant for the World Health Organization (WHO), to create awareness of using these substances during the time of recovery of a patient and even should provide proper information about its side effects. The use of these substances in the present

scenario is considered as an addiction, which needs to be monitored in such a manner so that the patients can be treated well. Changing of medical patterns is another way with the help of which the patients can receive better treatment and at the same time, creating banning of availability of cheap heroin can help in overcoming the issue of deaths.

### **Specific Aim**

Specific aims of this study are to promote effective program and policies for decreasing the negative impact of opioids in California and minimize the rate of deaths from opioid. Moreover, the program is based on applying new interventions to solve the issues related to poor clinical management.

### **Specific Objective**

The objectives of this program are based on meeting three categories such as health objective, behavioral objective and immediate objective.

#### ***Health objective***

The health objective of this program is to decrease the mortality rate of people from opioid. The objective decreases the mortality rate by 20% among the people of California within 36 months. Therefore, this objective can be considered as the best way of minimizing these issues of over-consumption.

#### ***Behavioral objective***

The behavioral objective of the program mainly focuses on limiting the faults in opioid prescriptions among many counties by 50%. The objective will be done within 24 months. Therefore, it improves the practice of managing poor clinical prescriptions of opioid. This objective also focuses on increasing high-quality opioid treatment among lower socioeconomic countries by 40% in the period of 24 months. Therefore, it reduces the consumption of overdose drugs.

#### ***Immediate objective***

This objective of this research is mainly focused to meet possible theoretical models and practices in order to manage the prescription charts with California. The charts of prescription need to be updated according to current interventions in healthcare policy. This objective can help in sorting out duplicate prescriptions by 50% in the period of 24 months.

### **Proposed method**

The best way this overconsumption of opioid can be limited is with the help of educational programming among the public, which can help the public in assessing the impact of such substance (Chen, Ballantyne & Patel, 2017). The other proposed method of limiting this substance use can through proper monitoring of prescriptions and even banning of duplicating the prescriptions. This can help the minors from not being affected by these substances as well. It is essential for the clinic to not sell these products to minor and even should avoid providing these substances to them even if they carry proper documents. These can help them in identifying the real users of these substances, which are recommended by the doctors. Another way with the help of which the use of these opioids substance can be controlled is by providing Narcan training and administration workshops to the civilians without licenses (Korownyk *et al.*, 2019).

### **Strategy for identifying best practice**

The best practice for the limitation of expansion of this epidemic can be educated regarding the side effects of this substance among the public. Another best practice can be that medical practitioners should be known and aware of the percentage of these substances' intake, which can heal the patients and even can treat the patients well. The injectable method can again be considered as the best way of mitigating these issues of over-consumption. The injection process can be monitored easily and the medical practitioners can even identify the required amount for the treatment of patients based on their age group and their medical conditions. With the help of this process, the treatment can be provided in an accurate manner and the overconsumption of these substances can even be limited.

### **Timeline**

**June 12:** Submission of full proposal

**June 12-September 3:** Exertion on Final CE Project

**September 9:** Submission Final CE Final Project

**September 9-23:** Work on Power Point Presentation

**September 25:** Submission Final CE Power Point Presentation

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