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Increased PDMP use highlights progress in fight against opioid epidemic

A new [report](#) released by the American Medical Association (AMA) demonstrates ways Wisconsin physicians are advancing the fight against the opioid crisis.

The report shows a substantial increase in the use of the Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMP) across the country from 2016 to 2017 as well as a decrease in opioid prescribing.

“I’m pleased with the progress we’ve made,” said Michael McNett, MD, chair of the Wisconsin Medical Society’s Opioid Task Force. “Opioid prescribing in Wisconsin dropped by 12 percent last year, putting us among the 10 states with the biggest improvements in the country. We’re making progress educating physicians on how to safely and effectively treat patients’ pain while minimizing the use of opioids.”

The report found:

- **A nationwide decrease in opioid prescribing for fifth year in a row.** Between 2013 and 2017, the number of opioid prescriptions decreased by more than 55 million — a 22.2 percent decrease nationally. Reductions occurred in every state, including a 25.7 percent decrease in Wisconsin over the four-year study period.
- **PDMP registration and use continues to increase.** In 2017, health care professionals nationwide accessed state databases more than 300.4 million times. In Wisconsin, the PDMP was queried nearly 5 million times in 2017 v. 1.6 million in 2016—a 32.4 percent increase, which coincides with passage of Wisconsin Act 266. The law went into effect in April 2017 and requires all Wisconsin-licensed physicians and other prescribers to review a patient’s records from the PDMP before issuing a prescription order for a monitored prescription drug. (Click [here](#) for state-level data.)
- **Physicians enhancing their education.** In 2017, nearly 550,000 physicians and other health care professionals nationwide took continuing medical education classes and other education and training in pain management, substance use disorders and related areas. Wisconsin-licensed physicians were required to complete two hours of continuing medical education on the Wisconsin Medical Examining Board’s (MEB) Opioid Prescribing Guideline and are required to complete similar opioid education during the 2018-2019 licensing period.

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“We’re doing well, but we still have a way to go,” said Dr. McNett. “Opioid prescribing is still two to three times what was in the mid-1990s. In addition, we need more treatment for addiction and are expanding education for physicians in this area.

“The Society will continue to partner with Rep. John Nygren, Gov. Scott Walker and Attorney General Brad Schimel as well as the many health care organizations and community groups that have made this issue a top priority,” he added. “Through our ongoing collaboration, I’m confident we can continue to see significant gains in the next few years to address this horrible epidemic of addiction.”

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With over 12,500 members dedicated to the best interests of their patients, the [Wisconsin Medical Society](#) is the largest association of medical doctors in the state and a trusted source for health policy leadership since 1841.

The American Medical Association is the premier national organization providing timely, essential resources to empower physicians, residents and medical students to succeed at every phase of their medical lives. Physicians have entrusted the AMA to advance the art and science of medicine and the betterment of public health on behalf of patients for more than 170 years. For more information, visit ama-assn.org.