

Cigna Outlines Steps to Help Curb National Drug Epidemic

WASHINGTON, 19 May, 2016 - Cigna today outlined steps to curb the country's opioid epidemic, starting with cutting the use of those drugs among its own customers by 25 percent over three years.

Drug overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in the U.S., with 47,055 lethal drug overdoses in 2014. Opioid addiction is driving this epidemic, with 18,893 overdose deaths related to prescription pain relievers, and 10,574 overdose deaths related to heroin in 2014.* The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention reports that use of narcotic painkillers has quadrupled in the past 10 years.

“To respond to this crisis, all stakeholders — patients, physicians and other providers, pharmaceutical manufacturers and distributors, payers, pharmacists and governments — must join together to prevent substance use disorders, and assure access to all appropriate treatments,” said David M. Cordani, president and CEO of Cigna.

Cigna is committed to eliminating the stigma associated with substance use so that people will seek the help they need – and recognizes that for many, substance use disorder is a chronic disease such as diabetes. The company is taking immediate action in prevention and treatment:

- Reducing its customers' opioid use by 25 percent – which would return to 2006 levels, before the drug crisis. To achieve this goal, Cigna will tap into its extensive experience with prevention, wellness and chronic disease management programs, and will work with clients, physicians and others to develop ways to increase prevention and treatment of substance use disorders.
- Encouraging the rapid adoption of the new CDC guidelines on opioid use, prescribing opioids for the shortest time possible to treat acute pain, and talking with patients about all options and risks before beginning long-term therapy. Further, Cigna is supporting efforts to require prescribers to check state Prescription Drug Management Program databases when prescribing more than a 21-day supply of a painkiller such as oxycodone or morphine.
- Limiting the quantity of painkillers when appropriate, and exploring additional controls for high-risk customers identified by Cigna's data on its customers. Cigna continually enhances its tracking programs to flag possible inappropriate use and to inform prescribers when an issue is identified.
- Treating substance use like other chronic diseases – holistically and using an evidence-based approach. Cigna is working with its network to ensure medication-assisted therapy – which combines behavioral therapy and medications to treat substance use disorders – is readily available and provided as part of a comprehensive treatment program. Cigna also supports efforts by the Administration and Congress to increase the patient limit for qualified physicians who prescribe buprenorphine, which will make medication-assisted therapy more accessible.
- Heightening awareness about the nature of substance use disorders, calling on the public to embrace a new view of substance use disorder as a chronic disease – and to not blame the patient if she or he has a relapse.
- Calling on the rest of the health insurance industry to join Cigna in the fight against this deadly disease, and to take similar steps to immediately reduce deaths from opioids.

Cigna's plan follows on the heels of its sponsorship of the May 4 *Washington Post* forum, [“Addiction in America”](#) at which Cordani said, “Addiction afflicts our friends and families, colleagues and communities. This is nothing less than a national tragedy – and a continued failure to address it will constitute a national failure.”

Earlier this month, Cigna also announced its collaboration with the [American Society of Addiction Medicine](#), in which Cigna furnished customer claims data to ASAM to test and validate three performance measures related to addiction treatment. The goal is to verify what works in the treatment of patients with addiction, make the medical community aware of proven strategies, and hasten the adoption of these successful methods.

Last year, Cigna Foundation provided a \$100,000 World of Difference grant to Shatterproof, a non-profit organization committed to ending addiction, and gave \$50,000 to make naloxone – a life-saving drug that reverses the effects of a drug overdose – available for use by first responders in Pennsylvania. Cigna also works with Stamp Out Stigma, an initiative spearheaded by the Association for Behavioral Health and Wellness, to change perceptions and reduce the stigma of mental illness and substance use.

For more information on Cigna's leadership in addressing the country's drug crisis, go to [Substance Use Disorder](#).

** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics, National Vital Statistics System, Mortality File. (2015). Number and Age-Adjusted Rates of Drug-poisoning Deaths Involving Opioid Analgesics and Heroin: United States, 2000–2014. Atlanta, GA: Center for Disease Control and Prevention.*

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