

## Economist Intelligence Unit Survey, Sponsored by Cigna, Reveals Americans' Views on Opioid Addiction

BLOOMFIELD, Conn., 20 September, 2017 - The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) and Cigna (NYSE: CI) today launched an [online hub](#) with survey findings on how U.S. medical and addiction practitioners and members of the American general public, including veterans, view opioid addiction and the best ways to treat it.

The research comes at a time when more than 33,000 Americans a year die from opioid-related overdoses.<sup>1</sup> In the U.S., the total economic burden from opioid misuse hit an estimated \$78.5 billion,<sup>2</sup> a number that reflects the cost to the U.S. economy as well as the impact the crisis has on families in lost jobs and lost wages.

Cigna commissioned the survey as part of its continuing commitment in helping to curb the national opioid epidemic, with special emphasis on veterans, who often struggle with pain, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and other health conditions, as well as challenges transitioning back to civilian life. The number of veterans living with opioid issues grew 55 percent between 2010 and 2015.<sup>3</sup> Between higher rates of chronic pain<sup>4</sup> and a 270 percent spike in opioid prescriptions over a 12-year period,<sup>5</sup> veterans are twice as likely to die from accidental opioid overdoses than non-veterans.<sup>6</sup>

“We know we can and must do more as a society. That’s why this report is so important as we fight this crisis. Ultimately, we hope it can contribute to the beginning of the end of opioid misuse across America,” said Cigna President and CEO David M. Cordani.

Among key findings, the survey revealed that only 47 percent of the U.S. general public – less than half – think opioid addiction is treatable, compared to 70 percent of medical practitioners. Both groups say that treating veterans who suffer from opioid addiction is more complex than treating others who suffer from opioid addiction.

More than a third of medical practitioners say they are not very confident they have the right resources and training to treat veterans living with opioid addiction. The survey also found that 43 percent of medical practitioners cited overprescribing as a cause of addiction, but 58 percent said they focus more on treating the patient’s condition than the potential for opioid misuse at the moment of prescribing. Thirty-two percent of veterans cited encouraging the medical community to prescribe less addictive painkillers as an effective way to reduce the supply of opioids to the general public.

The surveys were finalized in July 2017 and include 304 medical and addiction practitioners (70 percent who have treated veterans) and 2,800 Americans, 21 percent of whom are veterans. Compilation and analysis of results took place throughout August 2017.

The online hub includes an interactive map exploring the treatment options the U.S. general public would like to see greater access to, and points to case studies of successful programs across the nation. The online resource also includes an executive summary and [briefing paper](#) that provides an in-depth analysis of the recently completed survey and includes a [section dedicated to veterans](#), including an executive summary focused on veteran-specific responses.

“Cigna is optimistic that this is a challenge we as a *country* can overcome – by working together. The intelligence we gained from the EIU study is important because it points to where there are gaps to be narrowed, and how we may begin to address them. It will help us come together and know how best to work toward our common goal,” Cordani said.

Among steps Cigna is taking to reverse the epidemic, the company last year committed to reducing its customers' opioid use by 25 percent over three years. In July, Cigna hosted a forum with Roll Call in Washington, D.C., attended by government officials and thought leaders to discuss current legislative efforts and programs to fight this epidemic. Cigna also is collaborating with the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) to help transform the current treatment model based on best practices that are prevention-focused, and the company lifted preauthorization for medication-assisted treatment, an evidence-based intervention.

Additionally, in July 2017 the Cigna Foundation made a three-year grant of \$300,000 to the Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) to help expand its Rapid Response Referral Program, a community effort to help veterans meet their life goals through connections to education, medical and legal resources and benefits. Later this fall, Cigna will be announcing other support for veterans and for health care professionals who treat veterans.

For more information on Cigna's leadership in addressing the country's opioid crisis, please visit [here](#).

## **About Cigna**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hhs.gov/opioids/about-the-epidemic/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> Florence, Curtis S. PhD; Zhou, Chao PhD; Luo, Feijun PhD; Xu, Likang MD. "The Economic Burden of Prescription Opioid Overdose, Abuse, and Dependence in the United States, 2013." (Medical Care: October 2016 - Volume 54 - Issue 10 - p 901–906). West Chester, PA. Available online at: [http://journals.lww.com/lww-medicalcare/Abstract/2016/10000/The\\_Economic\\_Burden\\_of\\_Prescription\\_Opioid.2.aspx](http://journals.lww.com/lww-medicalcare/Abstract/2016/10000/The_Economic_Burden_of_Prescription_Opioid.2.aspx)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/veterans-face-greater-risks-amid-opioid-crisis/>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/veterans-face-greater-risks-amid-opioid-crisis/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/veterans-face-greater-risks-amid-opioid-crisis/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/frontline/article/veterans-face-greater-risks-amid-opioid-crisis/>