Cigna Intensifies Effort to Curtail Opioid Epidemic by Confronting Opioid Addiction and Overdose in U.S. Communities

BLOOMFIELD, Conn., 21 June, 2018 - Global health service company Cigna (NYSE: CI) is intensifying its commitment to curtail the opioid epidemic by focusing new drug prevention and treatment efforts in targeted U.S. communities. The company will collaborate with employers, customers, prescribing clinicians, pharmacists and community-based organizations to reduce the number of opioid overdoses by 25 percent among its commercial customers in these communities by December 2021.

Initially, Cigna will focus its local efforts in areas where a sizable number of Cigna commercial customers reside and where there are higher than average overdose rates, including communities in the states of Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey and Virginia and in the metropolitan areas of Chicago, New York, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. The goal is to reduce prescription and illicit opioid overdoses in these areas, and Cigna will advance initiatives that impact both Cigna customers and the communities at large. To support this initiative, Cigna and the Cigna Foundation will expand and accelerate the impact of community-based organizations that are leading localized programs. Cigna intends to learn from initial efforts during the three year time period and expand to other communities over time.

Nationally, in 2016, nearly 64,000 people died of drug overdoses across the United States and approximately two-thirds of these deaths were linked to opioids. Opioids were linked to one in 65 of all U.S. deaths in 2016, and one in five deaths or 20% of all deaths for adults ages 25-34. A new study based on U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data shows opioid-related deaths between 2001 and 2016 increased 345% and resulted in approximately 1.68 million person-years of life lost in 2016 alone.

“Behind every number, there are real people struggling along with families, employers and communities,” said David M. Cordani, Cigna President and Chief Executive Officer. “Our commitment to reduce drug overdoses by 25 percent is a commitment to each and every one of them, and we look forward to working closely with our partners to meet it.”

Employer-sponsored insurance covers nearly four in ten non-elderly adults with opioid addiction, and the costs of treating opioid and other drug addiction and overdose are significant, rising to more than $2.6 billion in 2016 from $0.3 billion 12 years earlier, a nearly nine-fold increase. Cigna partners with employers to make health plan benefit design decisions including, integrating medical, pharmacy and behavioral benefits and offering dedicated programs that help prevent prescription drug misuse and help people struggling with addiction.

Cigna has expanded an existing program that uses predictive analytics to identify customers who are most likely to suffer from an opioid overdose and prompts interventions to help prevent the overdose from happening.

In addition to continuing national efforts to address the opioid epidemic, the company will partner locally to develop immediate and long-term approaches that make it easier for people to access treatment for substance use disorders. Examples include medication-assisted treatment (MAT), comprehensive pain management and enhanced support and counseling, and making naloxone more readily available for treatment of an overdose. The company will also continue to reinforce safe prescribing guidelines, and will encourage a coordinated pharmacy care approach that includes care providers and community pharmacists.
In March 2018, Cigna announced a 25 percent reduction in prescription opioid use among its commercial customers achieved in collaboration with more than 1.1 million prescribing clinicians. However, Cigna claims data shows that despite a reduction in the number of prescriptions, opioid overdoses continue to rise. This is consistent with CDC data showing a continued increase in overdose deaths due to opioids and other substances in 2016 and provisional CDC data which shows the trend continued in 2017.

“The continued increase in people suffering from overdoses is alarming, and immediate action is needed to help disrupt this trend,” said Doug Nemecek, M.D., Chief Medical Officer for Behavioral Health at Cigna. “We know we can’t do it alone and are collaborating with partners on local efforts to curb this preventable disease by improving care for people with chronic pain and substance use disorders.”

To track against the goal of reducing overdoses by 25 percent, Cigna will measure claims submitted with an opioid overdose diagnosis code. The company will also continue to measure the total volume of opioids being prescribed based on morphine milligram equivalent doses, taking into account the number of pills and the dosing of those pills, as well as the relative strengths of opioid medications. Cigna will also continue to ask provider groups to sign a pledge to reduce opioid prescribing and to treat opioid use disorder as a chronic condition. To date, more than 9,000 provider groups and more than 130,000 prescribing clinicians have signed the Cigna opioid pledge, which dovetails with the U.S. Surgeon General’s “Turn the Tide” pledge and the CDC’s opioid prescribing guidelines.

In May 2018, the company initiated a consumer-focused awareness campaign to advance the concept of a “pain plan” and encourage conversations among individuals and health care providers about the safe use of opioids and other pain management options. As part of this campaign, Cigna's dedicated pain resource hub provides educational material and resources about pain, how it manifests, how it’s treated and how to manage it safely.

For more information on Cigna’s efforts to fight the opioid epidemic, please visit https://www.cigna.com/about-us/healthcare-leadership/away-from-blame.

About Cigna

Cigna Corporation (NYSE:CI) is a global health service company dedicated to helping people improve their health, well-being and sense of security. All products and services are provided exclusively by or through operating subsidiaries of Cigna Corporation, including Cigna Health and Life Insurance Company, Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, Life Insurance Company of North America, Cigna Life Insurance Company of New York, or their affiliates. Such products and services include an integrated suite of health services, such as medical, dental, behavioral health, pharmacy, vision, supplemental benefits, and other related products including group life, accident and disability insurance. Cigna maintains sales capability in over 30 countries and jurisdictions, and has more than 95 million customer relationships throughout the world. To learn more about Cigna®, including links to follow us on Facebook or Twitter, visit www.cigna.com. For more information about Cigna’s proposed acquisition of Express Scripts, please visit www.advancinghealthcare.com.
