

Press Release
June 3, 2019
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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Doctors Urged to Reduce the Prescription of Opioids

Experts say the opioid epidemic in the United States can in part be attributed to overprescribing and one of the best ways to lessen the opioid epidemic is to reduce the number of prescription painkillers given to patients after surgery.

A recent study conducted by the University of Michigan and published by the Journal of the American Medical Association concluded that surgeons can dramatically reduce the amount of opioid medications prescribed to patients following surgery, without impacting their level of pain control. Researchers conducted this study as over 90 Americans die daily from opioid overdoses, maintain Surgeons play a key role here. Surgeons prescribe 10 percent of all opioid prescriptions in this country. Prior the study it was a guessing game about how much patients actually needed to adequately relieve pain after surgery. Because of this, many patients were prescribed too much opioid medication. This led to increased rates of addiction and a large amount of leftover opioid pills in the community. These leftover medications often ended up in the hands of people who misused them.

Many individuals state that their first encounter with an opioid is from a prescription following a surgery or procedure. The co-director of the Opioid Policy Research Collaborative and the co-director of the Physicians Responsible for Prescribing Opioids states that individuals prescribed opioid medications do not tend to realize, when taking them, how highly addictive the drug is. Additionally, the physicians prescribing the medications do not realize the level of addictiveness either. An individual who is prescribed an opioid prescription for just a week can be vulnerable for developing an addiction.

Researchers set out to establish and test a guideline for surgery-related opioid prescriptions. They gathered data from 170 people who had undergone gallbladder surgery and determined how many pills they had been prescribed, how many they took, and how well their pain was controlled and found that although the average participant received a prescription of around 250 milligrams of opioids (about 50 pills), 100 of those surveyed said they only took about six pills. The rest remained in their medicine cabinet, giving efficacy to prevention programs that encourage safe disposal of prescription medications.

When the University of Michigan researchers found that patients seemed to be prescribed more pills than were needed, they developed a trial guideline for prescriptions with lower amounts of opioids. The patients who received a smaller prescription under the new guidelines reported the same level of pain control as those

originally studied. Researchers are hopeful their findings will lead to more appropriate prescribing of opioids across the United States.

The Opioid Policy Research Collaborative (OPRC), based in the Institute for Behavioral Health (IBH) of the Schneider Institutes for Health Policy at Brandeis University's Heller School for Social Policy and Management, is advancing desperately needed scholarship on interventions to address the opioid addiction epidemic. For more information please visit [www. http://heller.brandeis.edu/opioid-policy/](http://heller.brandeis.edu/opioid-policy/).

Physicians Responsible for Prescribing Opioids (PCSS) is a program funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) created in response to the opioid overdose epidemic to train primary care providers in the evidence-based prevention and treatment of opioid use disorders (OUD) and treatment of chronic pain. For more information please visit <https://pcssnow.org/about/>.

The Journal of the American Medical Association is a peer-reviewed medical journal published 48 times a year by the American Medical Association. It publishes original research, reviews, and editorials covering all aspects of biomedicine. To read the article please visit <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamasurgery/article-abstract/2664659>.

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is joining in the fight against this epidemic by conducting an opioid prevention awareness campaign entitled, "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE," in order to educate and update the community regarding opioid use and its consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the Opioid Epidemic at www.safeglencove.org.