

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: COVID-19 Will Worsen the Opioid Epidemic if We Don't Prepare Now

A recent article published in STAT News discusses the current Coronavirus pandemic that has affected individuals across the globe, along with concerns of it also affecting the individuals who are in need of opioids, or their preventative medications during these critical times.

The article explains how this virus is very contractable, as it has been taking many individuals' lives and is causing major panic everywhere. This critical moment in the world has people going to extreme measures to try to calm their worries of the unknown, thus resulting in an amplifying demand of medications such as Methadone. The article describes concerns of this pandemic also worsening the opioid crisis as it hasn't slowed down and could potentially increase if there aren't protocols implemented soon. The issue with Covid-19 is that it isn't just a virus that one can get better in a day or two, it is keeping people home for weeks and is trickling into the homeless populations, elderly, school systems, healthcare systems, the economy, and individuals who need to access a variety of items including their medications.

According to the article The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) currently recommends social isolation as a key measure for individuals to prevent getting infected and to curb spreading it to others. Many patients taking medications to treat their opioid use disorder - methadone or buprenorphine - aren't able to stay home because of government regulations that limit how these medications are prescribed and dispensed. Most opioid treatment programs require individuals to come into the program daily in order to get their dose, and that could mean risking a large amount of individuals who may contract and or potentially spread the virus during this time.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA) has been utilizing new guidelines during the pandemic to try to contain order and to serve the needs of these individuals in a safe way, but it isn't enough as other resources haven't been implemented yet to reduce human interaction to try and lesson the spread of Covid-19. In some States pharmacies are allowing for dispensing methadone to its patients but it's not enough in preventing individuals for coming into the programs to access their medication. Even though lead officials have advised citizens to "stock-up" on any needed items such as medications, this is not available for opioid users, and recovery patients, which can potentially put them in risk for withdrawal in a negative way. In case of quarantine, patients have been advised to "stock up" on their medications, an option that isn't available to those with prescriptions for controlled

substances like methadone. Regulators must consider granting patients on controlled substances longer prescriptions in preparation for shortages or challenges with accessing the health care system.

During unprecedented times such as a global pandemic, established protocols need to be modified to best serve patients and limit potential harms. Patients with addiction and their doctors deserve clear guidance about how to stay safe during such times.

STAT News is an American health-oriented news website produced by Boston Globe Media. For More information please visit www.statnews.com.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is a federal agency that conducts and supports health promotion, prevention and preparedness activities in the United States, with the goal of improving overall public health. To learn more about the CDC please visit www.cdc.gov

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is a branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is charged with improving the quality and availability of treatment and rehabilitative services in order to reduce illness, death, disability, and the cost to society resulting from substance abuse and mental illnesses. For more information about SAMHSA please visit www.samhsa.gov.

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is 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