



Managing Pain During an Opioid Epidemic

Resources for nurses, patients, and the public.

Chronic pain and opioid use disorder are complex, intersecting conditions that affect millions of Americans and result in untold disability, loss of function, and even death. Over the past two decades, opioid overdose deaths have risen sharply in tandem with increased prescribing of opioids for pain.¹ Drug overdose, predominately involving opioids, is now the nation's leading cause of unintentional injury deaths.¹ In October 2017, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared the opioid crisis a nationwide public health emergency.²

Nurses—who have an ethical responsibility to relieve pain and the suffering it causes³—may face challenges and constraints when caring for people taking opioids. Given the national opioid crisis and the risks associated with these drugs, providing optimal pain relief can create a conflict for nurses between their duty to manage pain and their obligation to avoid causing harm.³ The following resources are available to help nurses address this challenge by increasing their knowledge—and to help educate patients, families, and the public on chronic pain relief and ways to combat the opioid epidemic.

TOOLKITS

American Chronic Pain Association (ACPA): Tool Kit: Partners for Understanding Pain

www.theacpa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Tool-Kit-2018.pdf

Produced by a group of organizations led by the ACPA, this toolkit contains information on the HHS's National Pain Strategy, key messages to use in public advocacy efforts to increase awareness of chronic pain, and actions and tools for calling attention to issues in pain management. A summary of available toolkits on a host of pain-related topics is also provided.

American Hospital Association (AHA): Stem the Tide: Addressing the Opioid Epidemic

www.aha.org/system/files/2018-06/stem-the-tide-addressing-opioid-epidemic.pdf

Users can access national and state guidelines, trainings, webinars, reports, and other resources in eight categories: clinician education on prescribing practices; nonopioid pain management; addressing

stigma; treatment options for opioid use disorders; patient, family, and caregiver education; transitions of care; safeguarding against diversion; and collaborating with communities.

National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN): Opioid Toolkit

www.ncsbn.org/opioid-toolkit.htm

A compilation of guidelines and education resources focused on safe prescribing of opioids, misuse prevention, and ongoing research.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit

<https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma18-4742.pdf>

This toolkit outlines the essential steps to take when responding to an overdose and provides opioid overdose treatment information for prescribers, opioid safety tips for patients and family members, and resources for individuals recovering from an overdose.

RESOURCES FOR NURSES

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality: Opioids

www.ahrq.gov/opioids

Features opioid-related data, research, tools, blogs, and infographics, as well as the latest news on the agency's efforts to combat the opioid epidemic.

American Holistic Nurses Association: Pain Relief Tools for Patients and Self-Care

www.ahna.org/Home/Resources/Holistic-Pain-Tools

Tips for evidence-based nonpharmacologic pain management approaches that nurses can share with patients.

American Nurses Association (ANA): Opioid Epidemic

www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/work-environment/health-safety/opioid-epidemic

Succinct information on treatment and deterrence options, pain management, opioid legislation, and substance use disorder in nursing.

American Society for Pain Management Nursing

www.aspmn.org

This professional nursing organization aims to “advance and promote optimal nursing care for

people affected by pain,” and offers certification in pain management, educational webinars and videos, and a variety of position statements.

ANA Position Statement: *The Ethical Responsibility to Manage Pain and the Suffering It Causes*

www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/nursing-excellence/official-position-statements/id/the-ethical-responsibility-to-manage-pain-and-the-suffering-it-causes

Provides ethical guidance to nurses when caring for patients experiencing pain.

ANA: The Opioid Epidemic: *The Evolving Role of Nursing*

www.nursingworld.org/~4a4da5/globalassets/practiceandpolicy/work-environment/health-safety/opioid-epidemic/2018-ana-opioid-issue-brief-vfinal-pdf-2018-08-29.pdf

A discussion of nurses' role in addressing the opioid epidemic, ANA initiatives, and the federal government's response to the crisis.

International Nurses Society on Addictions

www.intnsa.org

This professional specialty organization seeks to advance excellence in nursing care for the prevention and treatment of addictive disorders; it publishes the *Journal of Addictions Nursing*, offers certification, and holds an annual conference.

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA): *NIDA Notes*

www.drugabuse.gov/news-events/nida-notes

Summarizes the latest research on drug abuse in several areas, including public health, prevention, and treatment.

National Institutes of Health Pain Consortium: Centers of Excellence in Pain Education

https://painconsortium.nih.gov/Funding_Research/CoPEs

A site with interactive modules on pain education and opioid prescribing risks, plus links to pain education training tools and videos from other federal partners.

NCSBN: Substance Use Disorder in Nursing

www.ncsbn.org/substance-use-in-nursing.htm

Provides comprehensive information on substance use disorder in the nursing profession, including guides for nurses and nurse managers, a video, posters, free continuing education courses, and links to relevant articles in the *Journal of Nursing Regulation*.

Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion: Pathways to Safer Opioid Use

<https://health.gov/hcq/training-pathways.asp>

A one-hour interactive training for health care professionals on how to prevent opioid-related adverse drug events based on recommendations from the National Action Plan for Adverse Drug Event Prevention.

Pain Management and the Opioid Epidemic: *Balancing Societal and Individual Benefits and Risks of Prescription Opioid Use*

www.nap.edu/catalog/24781/pain-management-and-the-opioid-epidemic-balancing-societal-and-individual

A 2017 consensus study report by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine updates readers on the state of the science on pain research, care, and education, and recommends actions to take in response to the opioid crisis.

RESOURCES FOR PATIENTS, FAMILIES, AND THE PUBLIC
ACPA

www.theacpa.org

The ACPA website offers information on pain conditions and treatments, tools for pain management and for communicating symptoms to health care providers, and pain awareness toolkits for health care professionals and older adults.

AHA: Prescription Opioids: What You Need to Know

www.aha.org/factsheet/2018-02-20-prescription-opioids-what-you-need-know

Addresses opioid risks and side effects and lists alternative options for managing pain. The information is also available as a printable fact sheet at www.aha.org/system/files/2018-02/opiodneedto-know.pdf.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Opioid Overdose: Information for Patients

www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/patients

This website informs patients about chronic and acute pain, nonopioid treatment options for chronic pain, expectations for opioid therapy, and strategies for preventing opioid misuse, and also answers frequently asked questions about opioids.

Food and Drug Administration (FDA): Disposal of Unused Medicines: What You Should Know

www.fda.gov/drugs/safe-disposal-medicines/disposal-unused-medicines-what-you-should-know

Information from the FDA about how to safely dispose of medications.

Narcotics Anonymous

<https://na.org>

This global, community-based nonprofit helps people recover from drug addiction using a 12-step program.



NURSING RESOURCES

Partnership for Drug-Free Kids: Help End Medicine Abuse

<https://drugfree.org/medicine-abuse-project>

Advice on properly securing and disposing of prescription medications, talking with teens about the dangers of drug abuse, and getting help for a child who may be abusing medication.

SAMHSA Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator

www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov

Individuals can enter an address, city, or zip code to find nearby substance use and mental health treatment facilities in the United States or U.S. territories. Any information entered is secure and anonymous.

SAMHSA's National Helpline: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline

Provides treatment referrals and information for people with or at risk for psychological or substance use disorders. Available 24/7 in English and Spanish. Callers receive free, confidential referrals

to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations. ▼

Tracy A. Ortelli is executive vice president of postlicensure nursing at Galen College of Nursing in Louisville, KY. She also coordinates Nursing Resources: tortelli@galencollege.edu.

REFERENCES

1. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; Health and Medicine Division; Board on Health Sciences Policy; Committee on Pain Management and Regulatory Strategies to Address Prescription Opioid Abuse, et al. *Pain management and the opioid epidemic: balancing societal and individual benefits and risks of prescription opioid use*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press; 2017. Consensus study report; <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/24781/pain-management-and-the-opioid-epidemic-balancing-societal-and-individual>.
2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. HHS acting secretary declares public health emergency to address national opioid crisis [press release]. 2017 Oct 26. <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2017/10/26/hhs-acting-secretary-declares-public-health-emergency-address-national-opioid-crisis.html>.
3. ANA Ethics Advisory Board. ANA position statement: the ethical responsibility to manage pain and the suffering it causes. *Online J Issues Nurs* 2018;24(1). <http://ojin.nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/ANAMarketplace/ANAPeriodicals/OJIN/Columns/ANA-Position-Statements/ANA-Position-Ethical-Responsibility-Manage-Pain.html>.