

AOA Joins the Action Collaborative as a Network Organization

The American Optometric Association (AOA), the professional organization of doctors of optometry, enthusiastically joins the Action Collaborative, making a visible commitment to reverse the U.S. opioid epidemic.

The AOA supports health professional education and training, including opioid prescribing guidelines and evidence-based standards. Severe pain issues arise as a result of the eyes' rich neurologic connections and vascular supply. For example, the cornea has the densest plexus of superficial nerves of any tissue in the human body. Eye pain can be acute (most common) or chronic and can have many potential causes.

Doctors of optometry are trained and licensed to differentially diagnose pain and to prescribe and dispense controlled substances in the course of professional practice, inclusive of opioids for pain control, that have known abuse potential.

The AOA supports research in prevention, treatment and recovery services and data metrics that can be helpful in developing new and effective approaches to treatment and prevention.ⁱ The AOA Health Policy Institute (HPI) furthered the awareness among doctors of optometry of their physician responsibilities when initiating opioid prescriptions for pain, including but not limited to, quantity and duration of required opioids, how to discuss the risks and benefits with patients, opioid withdrawal and overdose prevention strategies, knowledge of available treatments for opioid use disorders and addictions, and to support advancing the science and practice of pain management.ⁱⁱ

As a Network Organization, the AOA is committed to help 1) identify and raise the visibility of complex challenges, outstanding research gaps and needs of the opioid crisis that require a collective, multi-sectoral response; 2) elevate and accelerate evidence-based, multi-sectoral, and interprofessional solutions to improve outcomes for those affected by the opioid crisis; and 3) catalyze action on shared priorities and solutions to overcome the crisis and improve outcomes for all.

For example, the AOA is committed to collaborations with 1) the Food and Drug Administration in the advancement and refinement of prescribing practices, including efforts to make sure that only appropriately indicated patients are prescribed opioids, and that the prescriptions are written for appropriate durations and doses; 2) the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to promote the use of the CDC Products and Publications for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain; 3) the Office of National Drug Control Policy to help strengthen the infrastructure to create and sustain a reduction in substance abuse; and 4) the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in the design of new service delivery models and surveillance tools to help reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.ⁱⁱⁱ

Defined as physicians by Medicare, doctors of optometry are educated to recognize drug seeking behaviors and encouraged to ensure counseling, treatment and awareness of resources to patients who

exhibit evidence of addiction. As an essential public health response, the AOA also encourages all state optometric associations and schools and colleges of optometry to work to better integrate doctors of optometry within health care and community systems to reduce opioid-related health harms.

ⁱ <http://aoa.uberflip.com/i/944805-aoa-march2018optimized150/31?m4=>

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<https://www.aoa.org/documents/HPI/The%20Opioid%20Public%20Health%20Emergency%20and%20How%20Doctors%20of%20Optometry%20Can%20Help.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.healio.com/optometry/regulatory-legislative/news/online/%7Bb2d86dc0-bfa1-458d-a89c-65ba9956b7f4%7D/aoa-supports-vision-testing-for-drivers-licensing-renewal>