Huge Funding Boost Needed to Close Treatment Gap for Opioid Crisis?AMA

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The nation?s opioid epidemic is worsening because of policy, regulatory, and insurance barriers that continue to block access to treatment, especially for the patients who desperately need it. The American Medical Association or AMA says that a huge boost in funding is necessary in order to close these treatment gaps.

AMA President-elect Susan R. Bailey spoke to Congress regarding these concerns, saying that a lot of patients aren?t getting the treatment that they need.

?The good news is that we know that there are policy and clinical interventions that work and have a direct impact on saving lives and improving care,? Dr. Bailey testified at a House Oversight and Reform Committee hearing. ?The bad news is there is a huge gap in access to treatment. It is estimated that less than 35% of adults with opioid use disorder had received treatment for it in 2018.?

Progress continues on multiple fronts. As shown in the AMA Opioid Task Force?s 2019 progress report, physicians have significantly reduced the number of opioid prescriptions that they write. There are also rising numbers of doctors registering with and using their state prescription drug monitoring program. This means

more doctors are getting certified to provide in-office buprenorphine and prescribing Naloxone for at-risk patients.

AMA?s model legislation to remove commercial and Medicaid prior-authorization barriers to medication-assisted treatment (MAT) is now being used by different medical societies in several states.

?This progress, however, has not led to an overall reduction in mortality or a measurable increase in positive patient outcomes,? said Dr. Bailey.

She said that progress has been stalled by multiple barriers to evidence-based treatment. Dr. Bailey said these barriers include: stigma, reluctance to use MAT, lack of sufficient treatment facilities, lack of addiction medicine specialists, and payer practices that delay or deny care. But Dr. Bailey said the biggest barrier is a lack of financial support.

?Even if all the barriers discussed above were eliminated, there still would not be enough treatment due to lack of funding,? the AMA President-elect said. Click the link to see San Antonio's top rehab placement programs.

The AMA was pleased with the more than $10 billion appropriated in the 2018 and 2019 federal budgets. However, they also said it falls short given the scale of the opioid epidemic. ?Given the unprecedented nature of the current epidemic, much more funding will be needed to reverse and end this epidemic,? Dr. Bailey told the committee.

The Comprehensive Addiction Resources Emergency or CARE Act introduced in both the House and the Senate would authorize $100 billion over 10 years.

?We believe the CARE Act, through policy and funding, is a major step forward in addressing the opioid epidemic,? Dr. Bailey said. ?The CARE Act is intended to fill the current funding gap and sets up a framework to do so.?

Dr. Bailey added that she was pleased to see AMA-suggested language in the CARE Act giving grant-funding preference to states that have prohibited prior authorization or step therapy for MAT.

?The AMA believes this language will help to incentivize those states that have not yet removed prior authorization to do so.?

The current opioid epidemic is now considered the worst drug crisis in US history. Every day, over 130 Americans die from an opioid-related overdose. Lawsuits are piling up against drug manufacturers for their

alleged role in spreading the epidemic.

If someone in the family is struggling with opioid or alcohol addiction, it is important to seek help. A combination of medical detox and behavioral therapy can go a long way in the fight against drug abuse. But because every individual is affected by addiction differently, a comprehensive program tailored to their specific needs is necessary. Look for a nearby addiction treatment facility today and find out how drug treatment programs work.

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