



Opioid Epidemic Worsens in DC Region

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The rate of drug overdose deaths in D.C. surged this year and is now the third-highest in the nation?up from seventeenth. This is according to a panel convened last month by the American Association of Medical Colleges to discuss various solutions to the opioid crisis. The panel discussed opioid abuse, addiction, treatment, fatalities, and ways to deal with its effects.

The doctors who were assembled for the panel treat patients dealing with addiction daily. These doctors agreed that the opioid epidemic grew exponentially in the District this year.

?While there are more billionaires, there are also more homeless people,? said panelist Dr. Edwin Chapman, a graduate of Howard University Medical School and a specialist in addiction medicine. ?D.C.?s addiction problems have always been to street drugs.?

Opioid use and addiction are shifting from heroin to the lethal opioid Fentanyl, a very potent substance that is known to be about 100 times stronger than morphine. Drug users are switching from heroin to Fentanyl because of the latter?s availability and heroin?s diminishing supply. This means more long-time heroin users are overdosing and dying in D.C.

Washington has become "ground zero" for deaths, with more than 279 last year, surpassing the city's homicide rate. This is according to a recent Washington Post story describing the escalating Fentanyl situation.

The Bowser administration has a publicly-available 10-year plan that includes cutting opioid use in half by 2020. According to the AAMC panel moderator, recent Bowser administration budgets provided \$42 million to treat opioid addiction. Treatment for this is far cheaper than jail time, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

The mayor's plan also creates a public-private partnership of more than 40 stakeholders. The Bowser administration has given \$25,000 grants to develop curricula on pain management and opioid use.

"Medical schools in the District are doing innovative work"and succeeding in teaching innovative curricula about opioid treatment," said Ambrose Lane, founder, and chair of the Health Alliance Network. This is an advocacy group for health equity in poor communities. Click the link to see White Lake's top rehab placement programs.

In D.C., there are 300 to 400 medical educators who are teaching opioid treatment, prevention, and recovery to foster inclusive communities, according to Lane. He told the assembled group that the substance abuse unit of D.C.'s Metropolitan Police Department, along with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration or SAMHSA, has launched investigations of opioid use in downtown D.C.

D.C. is attempting to expand access to Naloxone and has been on the front lines of this advocacy for a while. Naloxone is a medication that reverses the effects of opioids, including overdoses. This medication has the potential to save a person's life if they are overdosing on opioids such as Fentanyl. It is often referred to by a popular brand name, Narcan.

The D.C. Policy Center says that Naloxone is safe and easy to use. In fact, it is being used in other states to help reduce the opioid-related fatalities. Every day, over 130 Americans are dying due to a drug overdose. Making Naloxone more accessible can reduce this number significantly.

Although local officials said that there are financial concerns regarding expanding the accessibility of Naloxone, it has also proven to have a "degree of success" and is, therefore, worth pursuing.

"It's too expensive to train police officers to use the kits to help the users, addicts, and people on the street where they are," Lane said during the panel discussion. The mayor's office will pass the proposed budget and later present Mayor Bowser's LIVE. LONG. DC. to the D.C. Council.

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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