



Five-Year Grant Worth \$17 Million Given to Researchers to Help Stem Opioid Crisis

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The University of Chicago Medicine has been awarded a five-year, \$17 million grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The goal is to help researchers understand how best to reduce opioid addiction and overdoses, particularly in prisons and other justice settings.

An estimated 130 people in the US die every day from opioid-related drug overdoses. The grant will help fight opioid addiction in prisons?an environment where people are more likely to die from opioid overdoses due to their reduced tolerance for prescription medications following incarceration.

When transitioning through the criminal justice system, former inmates become exposed to overdose because of complex issues spanning their mental health, family instability, and other factors.

Two public health researchers at The University of Chicago will lead the grant: infectious disease researcher John Schneider and urban public health researcher Harold Pollack.

?More than half of the people who use opioids end up in jail or some sort of correctional setting,? said

Schneider, a professor of medicine and public health sciences. "If we can engage the justice community around this problem, maybe we can make an impact."

Schneider has previously conducted public health and implementation science research with community members in the criminal justice setting, so he is familiar with the struggles of inmates dealing with opioid abuse.

Pollack, on the other hand, has extensively researched how to assist individuals with substance use disorders and behavioral health challenges within the criminal justice system. Click the link to see Santa Ana's top rehab placement programs.

"Everyone is desperate to find ways to reduce the carnage of the opioid epidemic, and everyone has a sense of urgency about this," said Pollack, the Helen Ross Professor at the School of Social Service Administration. "It's a humbling responsibility to be given this resource."

The grant, called the Justice Community Opioid Innovation Network grant, is part of the National Institutes of Health's Helping to End Addiction Long-Term initiative. This is an aggressive, trans-agency effort to develop scientific solutions quickly and help fight the national opioid health crisis.

The NIH HEAL initiative was launched in April 2018. It is focused on improving prevention and treatment strategies for opioid misuse and addiction. The initiative also aims to enhance pain management for patients struggling with opioid addiction.

Schneider and Pollack will oversee nearly a dozen research sites conducting opioid overdose prevention studies at the University of Chicago, focusing on people transitioning through the criminal justice system. The research sites are mainly comprised of other academic medical institutions. The sites are expected to collaborate with at least six criminal justice entities and programs across the US. This includes prisons, parole and re-entry systems, as well as community-based treatment providers. This should allow researchers to improve treatments for opioid addiction as well as pain management.

The UChicago team will provide support in several areas, including storing the various studies' large quantities of data, which will involve sensitive de-identified patient information. The University of Chicago will also serve as one of the research sites and will conduct randomized trials about opioid overdose prevention on people in the criminal justice system at five sites in Illinois, including several jails across the state.

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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