Penn Medicine Launches Center to Study Opioid Addiction Amidst National Drug Crisis

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Penn Medicine recently unveiled its latest plan: to launch a new Center of Excellence to help combat opioid addiction amidst the nationwide drug crisis. The center will focus on studying opioid addiction in order to come up with a deeper understanding of the problem.

In line with this new plan, the Penn Addiction Center of Excellence will gather researchers from the Radiology and Psychiatry Departments and bring them together to better understand opioid use disorder. This will help them come up with strategies on how to improve treatment for such disorders.

?The opioid crisis is a catastrophe for the country, which many people have suffered and lost their lives,? said Henry Kranzler, a psychiatry professor and director of the Center for Studies of Addiction at the Perelman School of Medicine.

Approximately 47,055 people died from drug overdoses in the United States in 2014 alone. This is according to information gathered by the Philadelphia Department of Public Health. Of those deaths, a stunning 61 percent involved the misuse of opioids. For context, this is double the rate from the year 2000.

While drug companies like Johnson & Johnson, Purdue Pharma, and many others are facing thousands of lawsuits across the country for their alleged role in spreading the opioid epidemic, researchers are coming up with more scientific solutions.

Recently, an Oklahoma state court judge fined Johnson & Johnson more than $500 million for misleading opioid advertising, which resulted in addiction, overdose, and deaths PET Radiochemistry Program director Robert Mach said that uniting research groups from different fields can expand existing knowledge of opioid use disorder.

?It is a top priority for NIDA [National Institute on Drug Abuse] to do research to better understand the mechanism of an opioid use disorder so that we can come up with a better treatment to combat the condition,? said Mach, who is also serving as a radiology professor at Penn.

The Penn Addiction Center of Excellence is funded through a five-year grant from the National Institute on Drug Abuse?s P30 Grant Program, which costs $8.9 million. The researchers will primarily focus on opioid receptors in opioid sensitivity, addiction, and suicide.

?[PACE] can help the world better understand the neurobiology of opioid use disorder and thereby identify novel approaches to treatment,? Kranzler said. Click the link to see Newfield's top rehab placement programs.

However, he added that while this initiative might be helpful in the long run, it still poses a few challenges. ?One of the difficulties with combining researchers from two very different fields is the ?language barrier? between them. Radiologist often doesn't speak the same ?language? as physiatrists, and vice versa.?

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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