



Health Care Regulatory Boards Launch Collaborative Effort Aimed at Opioid Epidemic

Four organizations representing the state regulatory boards that license U.S. physicians, physician assistants, pharmacists, nurses and dentists have announced the launch of the Opioid Regulatory Collaborative (ORC)—a new partnership aimed at addressing the nation's opioid epidemic.

The ORC will bring together senior leaders from the American Association of Dental Boards (AADB), the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB), the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy (NABP) and the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) to share resources and strategies to reduce opioid substance use disorder among the public as well as health care practitioners.

The ORC's three primary goals are to:

- Ensure that medical, pharmacy, nursing and dentistry regulatory boards are kept informed of trends and developments in the nation's ongoing effort to reduce opioid substance use disorder.
- Seek better alignment of opioid-related guidance and policies across regulatory boards to increase effectiveness in addressing opioid issues.
- Partner with and support the initiatives of other health care organizations aimed at the opioid epidemic, including the National Academy of Medicine's Action Collaborative on Countering the U.S. Opioid Epidemic.

By uniting the key health care professions that prescribe and dispense prescription medications, the ORC hopes to bring a new focus to the nation's ongoing efforts to curb opioid misuse.

Collectively, the AADB, FSMB, NABP and NCSBN represent the various state member-boards that regulate a combined total of more than five million physicians, physician assistants, pharmacists, dentists and nurses practicing in the United States.

Representatives of the four organizations have begun quarterly meetings and are planning a formal

summit meeting to take place in Washington, D.C., in March 2022.

In recent decades, the opioid epidemic has become a significant national public health crisis. Studies have shown that as many as one quarter or more of patients prescribed opioids may misuse them, and roughly 10% of patients using opioids for chronic pain eventually develop an opioid use disorder. In 2019, nearly 50,000 people in the United States died from opioid-involved overdoses. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that the total economic burden of opioid prescription misuse in the United States is \$78.5 billion a year.

Opioid prescription misuse is a serious issue within the health professions as well, with studies indicating that some licensed physicians, nurses and other licensed health care professionals may engage in prescription misuse during their careers.

2020–21 Report Tracks Increased Osteopathic Profession

Over the last year, the number of osteopathic physicians in the United States climbed to nearly 135,000—an 80% increase over the past decade—according to a report recently issued by the American Osteopathic Association (AOA).

The AOA's Osteopathic Medical Profession Report tracks expansion and growth within the osteopathic medical profession and examines current demographics and trends related to osteopathic physicians (DOs) and osteopathic medical students.

The report notes that the profession added nearly 7,500 osteopathic physicians to the health care work force and osteopathic profession in 2021, with DOs now accounting for approximately 11% of all physicians in the United States.

According to the report, two-thirds of actively practicing DOs are under the age of 45, totaling more than 78,000 physicians. Overall, females make up 43% of DOs in active practice and nearly three-quarters of them are under the age of 45.

To read the full report, visit <https://osteopathic.org/about/aoa-statistics>.