

Two new online medical education courses address opioid crisis

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[The DC Center for Rational Prescribing \(DCRx\)](#) today announced the availability of two new online education courses aimed at teaching doctors and other healthcare professionals some of the myths and facts surrounding the use of prescription opioid painkillers. The information in the online videos could help curb the epidemic of opioid-related deaths by reducing unnecessary prescriptions—and offers valuable advice on how to wean patients from these addictive drugs.

The DC Department of Health and the Milken Institute School of Public Health (Milken Institute SPH) at the George Washington University created DCRx in collaboration with Georgetown University Medical Center's PharmedOut to provide impartial, scientific information about prescription drugs and other therapies to doctors, pharmacists, nurses and other health professionals

The two new educational courses were developed to help physicians and others prescribers of painkillers understand both the benefits as well as the substantial risks. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), more than 28,000 people in the United States died from an opioid-related overdose in 2014. More than 2 million people in the U.S. abused or were dependent on these drugs. And that same year at least half of all [opioid-related deaths](#) involved a prescription for an opioid painkiller.

"Opioid dependence and addiction as well as opioid-related deaths are a serious public health issue in the United States," said Susan Wood PhD,

Associate Professor of Health Policy and Management at the Milken Institute SPH. "The District of Columbia is taking action to address the opioid epidemic, and better education of health professionals is a key component of DC's response."

The new modules, Myths and Facts about Opioids and Getting Patients Off of Opioids, explain how pharmaceutical company marketing and sales tactics contributed to the current epidemic of [opioid abuse](#) and discuss the recent CDC guidelines for prescribing these drugs safely.

The online videos also:

- Explore the difference between tolerance, dependence and addiction—and the risk that addicted patients will turn to cheaper street drugs such as heroin.
- Discuss the adverse effects of chronic opioid use, including the signs and symptoms of withdrawal and accidental overdose.
- List some of the alternatives to [opioid drugs](#) such as over-the-counter painkillers, exercise, physical therapy, yoga, and other therapies that can ease chronic pain.
- Talk about the importance of naloxone as a tool for people who overdose on these drugs. Naloxone blocks or reverses the effects of opioid drugs and can save lives.

"Opioids are not the best treatment for chronic pain, yet they have been often inappropriately prescribed in recent decades," said Adriane Fugh-Berman MD, Associate Professor of Pharmacology and Physiology at Georgetown University Medical Center. "DC is the only jurisdiction to offer industry-free, evidence-based continuing medical education (CME) and continuing pharmacy education (CPE) free to its health professionals." Previous online continuing medical education modules developed by DCRx include one on rational prescribing in older adults; a course on generic drugs; and a three part series about the use of medical

cannabis for the treatment of health problems. This content offers CME and CPE credits and is available at no cost to physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and other healthcare professionals who are licensed in the District. Anyone can view modules without charge, and CME/CPE credit for all modules is available for \$20 for [healthcare professionals](#) outside of DC.

To learn more about DCRx, view the two new courses on opioid drugs, and view additional resources, visit [The DC Center for Rational Prescribing](#).

Provided by George Washington University

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