

Pediatric workforce must address opioid crisis

October 3 2016

In late August, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) called on providers who care for youth to offer the same treatments routinely offered to adults - including medications like buprenorphine (commonly known by its brand name, Suboxone) - to adolescents.

Now a group of pediatricians is calling on the pediatric workforce - who have in many settings - avoided addressing substance use among their patients, to do more to address opioid addiction among young people.

In a Comment in *The Lancet*, Scott Hadland, MD, pediatrician and addiction specialist at Boston University School of Medicine and Boston Medical Center, and colleagues highlight the need for providers who care for youth - including pediatricians, family physicians, nurse practitioners and physician assistants - to intervene early with evidence-based treatment including medication-assisted treatment, potentially including Suboxone when appropriate. Many young people continue to see their pediatric provider well into young adulthood, which is precisely when these patients first struggle with opioid addiction.

"To date, the pediatric workforce has been inadequately prepared and poorly mobilized to confront the opioid epidemic," explains Hadland. "People who care for youth have a unique opportunity to intervene before addiction becomes deeply engrained in a young person's life and can prevent a lifetime of potential harm."

In reference to the AAP recommendation, Hadland and colleagues note

this is the first time a major pediatric organization has promoted medication-assisted treatment for adolescents. In 2015 Addiction Medicine became an officially recognized board-certified subspecialty of medicine, for the first time allowing a special training pathway for pediatricians and [family physicians](#) who want to specialize in treating [young people](#) with addiction.

"Drug overdoses kill more people annually than do [motor vehicle accidents](#) in many places in the United States," says Hadland. "Two out of 3 people in treatment for opioid addiction first used opioids before the age of 25, and 1 in 3 used them before the age of 18. It is time for the pediatric workforce to do its part to prevent more young lives from being tragically lost."

Provided by Boston University Medical Center

Citation: Pediatric workforce must address opioid crisis (2016, October 3) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-10-pediatric-workforce-opioid-crisis.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--