

Point/counterpoint debate takes aim at the opioid epidemic

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Two experts with opposing views squared off on the hotly debated topic of how best to control the exploding opioid epidemic in the U.S.- with increasing regulation of physician prescribing practices or by better educating patients and doctors. The fascinating and informative discussion is published in a Point/Counterpoint article in the peer-reviewed, open access journal *Healthcare Transformation*.

In the article entitled "Point/Counterpoint: Opioid Abuse in the United States," Moderator Antonia Chen, MD, MBA, Associate Editor of *Healthcare Transformation*, led a lively, straight-talking conversation between Jane C. Ballantyne, MD, University of Washington, Seattle, who advocates for the appropriate use of opioids and education for physicians and patients, and Meghna Patel, MHA, Director of the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) Office in the Pennsylvania Department of Health, Harrisburg, who has implemented key state regulations aimed at curbing the [opioid](#) epidemic.

Dr. Chen challenged the discussants with questions such as "How do we fix the opioid epidemic?" and "What is the role of regulation for physicians?" Dr. Chen asked, "What is the best way to educate patients and doctors?" and "What is the role of other alternative medications [such as marijuana and other prescription drugs]?"

In Dr. Ballantyne's view, people taking opioids tend to think there is no alternative. "But the more we look at this, the more we realize that people who tend to succeed in getting off opiates altogether often feel a

lot better, and [patients](#) who never go down the opiate pathway usually have much better outcomes in terms of their function and even pain."

Ms. Patel stated, "I think that the total avoidance of [prescription opioids](#) is not an ethical option. If a patient is in chronic pain, then the patient may need a prescription opioid and whatever the physician thinks is best for the patient."

"We need to transform how we think about pain," says *Healthcare Transformation* Editor-in-Chief Stephen Klasko, MD, MBA, President, Thomas Jefferson University (TJU) and CEO Jefferson Health (Philadelphia, PA). "In Philadelphia, we're seeing the opioid addiction epidemic in our emergency department every day."

More information: Antonia F. Chen et al, Point/Counterpoint: Opioid Abuse in the United States, *Healthcare Transformation* (2017). [DOI: 10.1089/heat.2017.29038.pcp](#)

Provided by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc

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