



# Intermountain Healthcare Sets Goal to Reduce Opioid Tablet Prescribing by 40 Percent

*In 2015, 33,000 people died from unintentional overdoses involving opioids—and nearly half of those deaths involved prescription opioids*

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, USA, August 24, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Utah-based Intermountain Healthcare has pledged to reduce by 40 percent the average amount of opioid tablets prescribed per acute pain prescription at its 22 hospitals and 180 clinics by the end of 2018. Intermountain is the first U.S. health system to formally announce such a significant and specific amount of reduction as a target.

Opioid misuse and abuse nationally has exploded into a health crisis affecting many people. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in 2015, more than 33,000 people died from unintentional overdoses involving opioids—and nearly half of those deaths involved prescription opioids. President Donald Trump has declared the opioid crisis a national emergency.

Intermountain will introduce new tools and policies for its caregivers to reduce the number of opioid tablets the organization prescribes by more than 5 million annually.

“Patients with acute or chronic pain conditions will still be able to get the medications they need,” said Doug Smith, MD, associate medical director for Intermountain Healthcare. “We will ensure patients have access to the full range of options to manage pain,” he said.

“Currently, nationwide, providers tend to write prescriptions for more opioids than patients need, and large quantities of the medications are often left over after the need for pain relief is past,” said Dr. Smith. “We will follow best practices in prescribing so the medications prescribed more closely match the needs of patients.” Some studies have shown that two-thirds of all opioids misused and abused come from family members or friends.

To achieve the 40 percent reduction, Intermountain has already provided training to about 2,500 caregivers within its system, with plans to expand training to additional prescribers in Utah and Idaho communities. Intermountain is adding prompts and default order sets into its electronic health records to help reduce the number of tablets prescribed.

Intermountain's new efforts follow on its support of other statewide initiatives. Intermountain works with the Utah Department of Health, the Utah Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health, and others to provide extensive provider and patient education, as well as supporting community initiatives to reduce opioid usage and safely dispose of medications. For example, Intermountain community pharmacies installed secure medication disposal drop boxes for unused medications in 2015. So far, more than 15,000 pounds of unused medications have been disposed of by the community in the drop boxes.

Intermountain also plans to expand other services, such as pain management clinics and treatment resources for opioid use disorders, to better help patients with chronic pain or addiction. More educational services for patients will be offered, and complementary therapies will be available.

Intermountain Healthcare is a Utah-based not-for-profit system of 22 hospitals, 180 clinics, a Medical Group with about 1,500 employed physicians and advanced practitioners, a health plans group called SelectHealth, and other medical services. Intermountain is widely recognized as a leader in transforming healthcare through high quality and sustainable costs. For more information, visit [www.intermountainhealthcare.org](http://www.intermountainhealthcare.org).

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