



White House Declares Opioid Crisis a Public Health Emergency

Intermountain Healthcare working to reduce opioid usage

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, USA, October 26, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The White House officially declared a public health emergency on the opioid epidemic nationwide. President Donald Trump made the announcement today and spoke on the actions that will be taken under the Public Health Services Act to direct grant money from federal agencies towards helping tackle the problem.

The opioid action is the first public health emergency with a nationwide scope since a year-long emergency to prepare for the H1N1 influenza virus in 2009 and 2010.

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. Utah ranked seventh in the country for opioid deaths from 2013-2015.

Utah-based Intermountain Healthcare has been working diligently the past few years to address the opioid epidemic. Intermountain pledged to reduce by 40 percent the average amount of opioids 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.

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, support community initiatives to reduce opioid usage, distribute Nalaxone rescue kits, 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 recently pledged an additional \$2 million in 2018 for these contributions and to expand other services -- such as pain management clinics and treatment resources for opioid use disorders -- to better help patients with chronic pain, or to prevent or treat 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 some 1,500 employed physicians, a health plans division called SelectHealth, and other health services. Helping people live the healthiest lives possible, Intermountain is widely recognized as a leader in transforming healthcare through high quality and sustainable costs. For more information about Intermountain, visit intermountainhealthcare.org.

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