

Intermountain Healthcare Reduced Number of Opioid Pills Prescribed by 3.8 Million in 2018

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SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH, USA, February 21, 2019 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Intermountain Healthcare reduced the number of opioid tablets prescribed to patients in acute pain by 3.8 million in 2018, a step that's helping to reduce the risk of opioid dependency and misuse in Utah.

Intermountain has made opioid reduction a top priority, and the dramatic drop in opioid tablets prescribed by Intermountain clinicians in 2018 means the system cut opioid

prescriptions by more than 30 percent last year. Acute pain is categorized as short-term pain that typically accompanies events like a broken arm or a surgery.



“We knew these would be lofty goals and we’re encouraged by the reduction in opioid tablets and the success of our other opioid-reduction efforts. We knew these were the right steps to take,” said David Hasleton, MD, Intermountain Healthcare’s associate chief medical officer. “We’re continuing our focus to implement appropriate evidence-based opioid treatments, provide alternative forms of pain control for our patients, and educate providers and the public about the safe use of opioid medications.”

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Lisa Nichols, Intermountain Community Health executive director

Related accomplishments in Intermountain’s opioid-reduction efforts:

- Intermountain exceeded its goal to increase medically- assisted treatment for opioid use disorders by more than 10 percent.
- Intermountain reduced by 29 percent the number of patients prescribed both opioids and benzodiazepines, a medication commonly used to treat anxiety and other psychological conditions. The combination of these two medications could put patients at risk for suppressed breathing.

As part of its ongoing opioid-reduction initiative, Intermountain's 2019 goal is to reduce opioid tablets for acute pain by an additional five percent. Intermountain will also continue to increase access to medication-assisted treatment for opioid dependency and continue to advance opioid co-prescribing, which allows pharmacists, as well as physicians, to provide opioid-reversing drugs that can save the lives of people who overdose.

The state of Utah has made significant strides in addressing the national opioid epidemic. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported in August that Utah was one of a few states that saw a decline in opioid-related deaths.

The CDC reported a near 12 percent reduction in deaths in Utah from January 2017 to January 2018. Efforts by providers such as Intermountain, and increased access to the opioid-reversing drugs naloxone and Narcan, have contributed to this reduction.

Intermountain's efforts to reduce opioid misuse also includes medication disposal and collaborating with state, local governments, and community partners through the "Use Only As Directed" public awareness campaign. More information on public awareness messaging can be found at www.useonlyasdirected.org.

Intermountain pharmacy drop-boxes have received over 26,000 pounds of medication since February 2015. Intermountain has also helped give out more than 1,700 naloxone kits. Intermountain pharmacies also offer naloxone kits for purchase without a prescription and the system has helped to fund additional kits for Utah Naloxone, which is a coalition of prescribers, pharmacists, public health workers, recovery advocates, and people who've lost loved ones to the opioid epidemic.

"We understand it takes all of us working together to reverse the opioid epidemic. Utah has great coalitions that are coming together for the safety of our families, our friends, and our communities," said Lisa Nichols, Intermountain Healthcare's Community Health executive director. "We're encouraged by our successes so far, but we're not where we need to be yet. We're committed to continuing the fight against opioid misuse and abuse."

Intermountain Healthcare is a Utah-based not-for-profit system of 23 hospitals, 170 clinics, a Medical Group with some 2,300 employed physicians and advanced care practitioners, a health insurance company called SelectHealth, and other health services. Intermountain is widely recognized as a leader in transforming healthcare through evidence-based best practices, high quality, and sustainable costs. For more information about Intermountain, visit intermountainhealthcare.org.

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