Case #1 Policy Analysis: Alternatives in Response to the U.S. Opioid Epidemic

Formulating Policy: Strategies and Systems of Policymaking in the 21st Century
November 20, 2019
Revisiting Some Numbers
A Brief Overview of the Epidemiology

• Key Points
  – Trends
  – Types of Drugs
  – Intentionality of Deaths
  – Other observations

• 2017 Data
  – 49,000 deaths
  – Increases in heroin and fentanyl
  – Despite increases in naloxone access
  – 2018 some optimism
A Brief Review of the Epidemiology

- Drug overdose increasing among all age groups; most dramatic increases in the middle years; recent data about high school youth.

- Synthetic opioids and heroin more common among younger age groups compared to prescription opioids.
A Brief Review of the Epidemiology

- In 2015, the age-adjusted rate of drug overdose deaths among non-Hispanic white persons (21.1 per 100,000) was nearly 3.5 times the rate in 1999 (6.2).

- Different patterns of drug use among race and ethnic groups.
Youth and Opioid Use

• Variation among jurisdictions

• Role of Rx opioids

• High rates of use
Defining the Problem, Considering Policy Solutions
Policy Alternatives: What to Consider?

- Will it work?
- Is it ethical?
- Is it legal?
- Is it feasible?
  - Technically
  - Politically
  - Culturally
- What is the cost?
- Who will it apply to?
- How long will it take to work?
- Relative to What…
Many Problems; Many Solutions

- Problem: Over supply of harmful medicines by legal manufacturers
- Solution:
  - Abuse-deterrent formulations
- Considerations
Many Problems; Many Solutions

• **Problem:** Over prescribing of legal medications

• **Solutions:**
  - PDMPs
  - Clinical Guidelines
  - Pharmacy Benefit Managers
  - Alternative Therapies for Pain Management

• **Considerations**
Many Problems; Many Solutions

• Problem: People with OUDs are not getting treatment
• Solutions:
  – Access to treatment
  – Awareness of treatment effectiveness
  – Attitudes about treating addiction with medication
• Considerations
Many Problems; Many Solutions

• Problem: People who use drugs are dying from overdose and are at risk of acquiring preventable infectious diseases

• Solutions:
  — Access to naloxone
  — Access to sterile needles
  — Access to overdose prevention sites

• Considerations
Assessing Alternatives

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Assembling the Evidence for Policymakers

- Process
- Products
- Impacts
- Lessons Learned