

MetroHealth Office of Opioid Safety

By Joan Papp, MD, Director, Office of Opioid Safety, MetroHealth



Opioid overdose continues to be the greatest threat to public health in Northeast Ohio and has been the leading cause of injury-related deaths statewide since 2007. This crisis, which started with an epidemic of prescription opioid abuse, has accelerated at an unprecedented pace, with the widespread availability of illicit heroin and fentanyl in Cuyahoga County over the past two years. This rate of acceleration represents a dire public health emergency and MetroHealth Medical Center is leading the fight with its new Office of Opioid Safety, led by Dr. Joan Papp. The mission of the new office is to improve opioid safety throughout the MetroHealth System and in the community through education, advocacy and treatment.

Since 2013, Dr. Papp has led MetroHealth's Project DAWN (Deaths Avoided With Naloxone) overdose prevention program, which is responsible for distributing the opioid antidote naloxone to more than 7,000 individuals and is credited with more than 1,000 lives saved with opioid overdoses reversed. The new office will continue to manage Project DAWN, but will address opioid safety and overdose prevention in a much more comprehensive way. The immediate goals of the office are to educate healthcare professionals on state and federal opioid guidelines, promote safer opioid prescribing and educate healthcare professionals on how to identify and treat opioid use disorder. The office is currently staffed with a full-time program manager, two Project DAWN outreach professionals and a full-time senior medical educator to work alongside Dr. Papp. The office aims to hire additional staff in 2018 to educate the community and collect data on outcomes. The senior medical educator is tasked with developing a curriculum to carry out the educational goals. Some early successes addressing education include a regional *SCOPE of Pain* safe opioid prescribing conference attended by more than 80 healthcare providers in the region, DATA 2000 waiver training of more than 75 prescribers who are now able to prescribe buprenorphine for treatment of opioid use disorder, and the development of a simulation training program to teach communication skills on how to lead difficult conversations with patients about opioid use. An education module on opioid best practice was also created for all providers to promote compliance with state and federal rules and guidelines.

MetroHealth recognizes that some healthcare providers are struggling to manage complex patients, and this new office aims to identify these providers and direct additional resources to them to support providers and to improve patient safety. MetroHealth is identifying the providers by analyzing prescribing patterns like high frequency and high morphine equivalent doses (MED) of opioids or concurrent prescriptions for benzodiazepines that may place patients at risk. If a provider is identified, additional tools and resources are provided to assist them. Some of these tools are clinical care pathways for both pain management and treatment of opioid use disorder, provider and patient education and better access to specialty services. Providers are also encouraged to participate in the communication skills simulation training.

The new office continues to work alongside the AMCNO, striving for improved state and federal policy that supports physicians and increases access and reimbursement for treatment of opioid use disorder. In October, the MetroHealth Office of Opioid Safety hosted the Task Force on HOPES (Heroin, Opioids, Prevention, Education and Safety) meeting led by Speaker of the Ohio House, Clifford Rosenberger, and chaired by State Representative Robert Sprague, in a roundtable discussion to share successful ongoing work in the community and ways in which that work can be spread and supported by the General Assembly across the state. An open hearing followed the roundtable discussion that

allowed community members to discuss concerns and ideas to address the opioid epidemic. The office will also work closely with the Center for Health Affairs and its newly appointed Executive Director of the Northeast Ohio Hospitals Consortium on Opioid Addiction to advocate for sensible policy changes and to aid in spreading successful programs to all local hospitals. (For more information on the HOPES session see page 5.)

To better serve the community's growing need for addiction treatment, MetroHealth is now offering expanded outpatient addiction treatment services at its Parma campus located on Snow Road. The treatment program currently offers medication-assisted treatment with buprenorphine and a 6-week intense outpatient behavioral health treatment program. These services can be accessed by scheduling through the Department of Psychiatry, and walk-in assessment hours are available on Thursday mornings.

Lastly, the Office of Opioid Safety aims to open a physical space for the public early in 2018, which will serve as a one-stop resource for patients and families seeking help and for professionals on all matters related to addressing the opioid epidemic in our community. ■

Editor's note: Dr. Joan Papp is a current member of the AMCNO and she was the recipient of our Special Honors Award in 2015.