

Summary

The misuse of opioids, including prescription pain relievers is a national epidemic that affects our public health as well as our social and economic welfare. Over the past several years, there have been multiple efforts to prevent and treat opioid addiction - including prescribing guidelines and increasing access to specialty care.

California can reduce the over-reliance on prescription opioids by integrating nonpharmacological treatments to pain management care plans.

Background

In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the acceptance and use of prescription opioids for the treatment of chronic, non-cancer pain, such as back pain or osteoarthritis, despite serious risks and the lack of evidence about their long-term effectiveness.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has estimated that between 1999 and 2016, more than 200,000 people died in the United States from overdoses related to prescription drugs. The CDC also found that in 2016, 116 people died every day from opioid related overdoses and 11.5 million misused prescription opioids. Overdose deaths involving prescription opioids were five times higher in 2016 than in 1999.

Opioid prescribing guidelines, like those by the CDC and the Medical Board, already recommend the exploration of non-opioid therapeutic options or if opioids are prescribed they should be combined with non-opioid therapies.

The Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) has been implementing specific non-pharmacologic therapies recommended by several clinical guidelines. As noted in *Opioid Use Among Veterans of Recent Wars Receiving Veterans Affairs Chiropractic Care*, a key set of the recommended therapies--spinal

manipulation, massage, acupuncture, exercise, and patient education--are the core components of multimodal chiropractic care in the VA. From 2012 to 2016, the number of veterans receiving an opioid for any reason decreased approximately 25%, and one component of the VA's approach has been expanding access to nonpharmacological pain therapies.

States, such as Oregon, Vermont, Ohio, West Virginia, and more, have recently enacted legislation making non-pharmacological alternative treatments more accessible, thus reducing their over reliance on opioids.

This Bill

While prescription opioids have been often used to treat chronic and acute pain, and when used appropriately, can be an important component of treatment, we have known there are very serious risks associated with their use and that there are more safe and effective treatments available.

As the California Health Care Foundation's *Changing Course: The Role of Health Plans in Curbing the Opioid Epidemic* states, alternative treatments to opioids, such as physical therapy, chiropractic care and acupuncture, have been found to play an important role in the delivery of cost-effective, non-drug services in both acute and chronic stages, as complementary to traditional treatments.

This bill will do all of the following:

- Extends current requirements to apply to any patient, not just a minor, that a provider discuss pertinent information related to the use of opioids before the first prescription is issued and obtain written informed consent.
- Discuss the availability of nonpharmacological treatments for pain management.
- Require the prescriber to offer a referral to a nonpharmacological providers such as acupuncture, chiropractic, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and mental health services.