

# Turning point: Confronting the Opioid Epidemic

## Introduction

Traditionally, doctors have shown great caution in the use of opioid drugs for pain management, outside of chronic, cancer related care. But in recent years, that caution has all but vanished. Today millions of Americans are routinely prescribed these powerful — and dangerous — drugs. **The result is a nationwide epidemic of opioid abuse, addiction and accidental death.**

Approximately 4.5 million estimated U.S. citizens are addicted to prescription opioids<sup>1</sup>



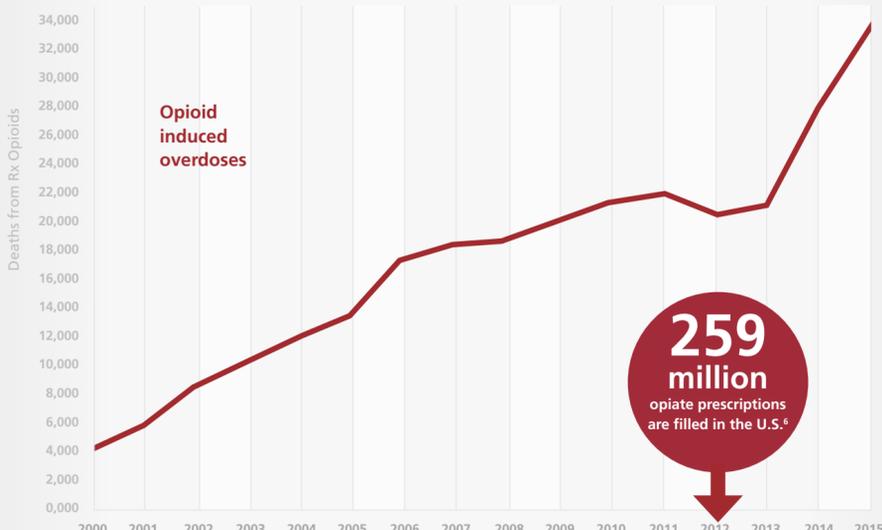
Workers who use prescription opioids for 3 months or more almost never return to work<sup>4</sup>

## The history of opioid prescriptions

**Prior to 1980s: opioids reserved for short-term, highly acute pain management, cancer treatment and end-of-life palliative care.**

Opiates are now the leading cause of accidental death in U.S.<sup>5</sup>

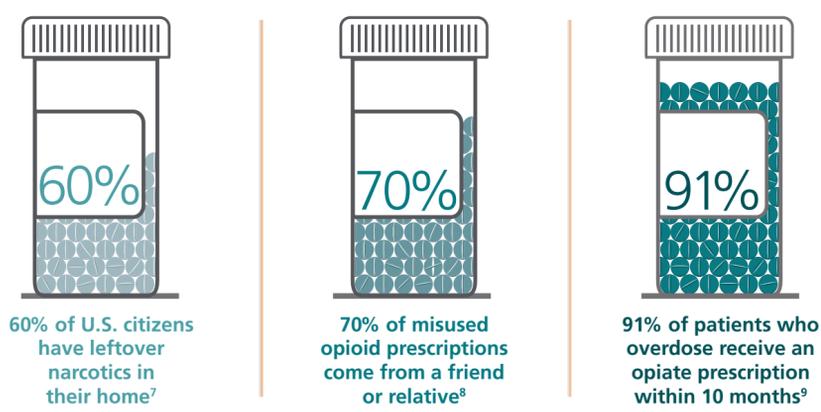
- 1986**  
First key publication supporting safety of long-term opioid use.<sup>6</sup>
- 1987**  
MS Contin<sup>®</sup> approved.<sup>6</sup>
- 1995**  
Oxycontin approved.  
"Pain as 5th Vital Sign" campaign launched.<sup>6</sup>
- 1996 onward...**  
Multiple opioid products enter market. Hundreds of millions (\$) in marketing.  
Opioid prescriptions skyrocket.<sup>6</sup>



Years 2000 – 2013: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, NVSS, 2013. Years 2014 – 2015: MMWR/Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Increases in drug and opioid-involved overdose deaths—United States, 2010–2015. Dec. 16, 2016.

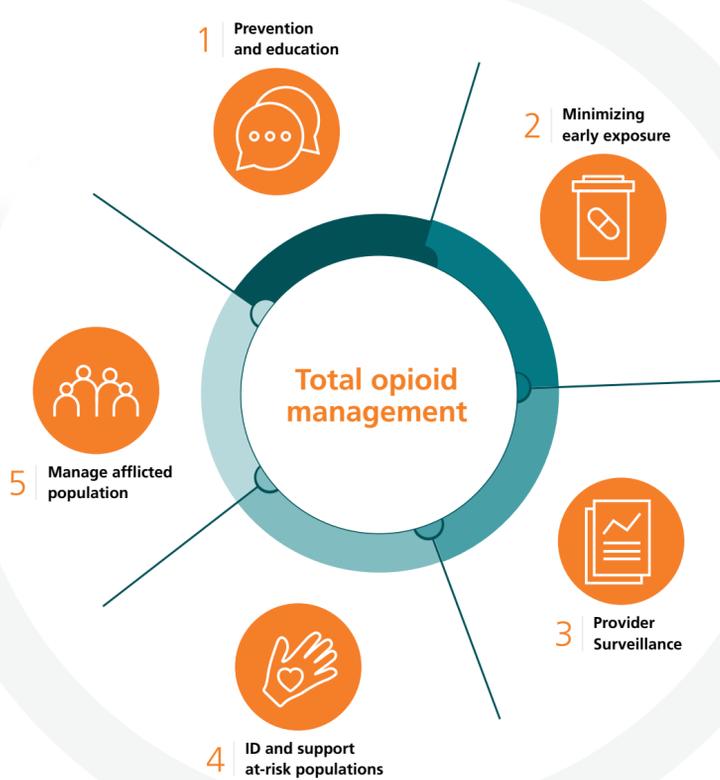
**2016: New CDC guidelines urge new caution in physician opioid prescribing.**

## Opioids shockingly easy to obtain



## Total opioid management: Where are we headed

- 1. Prevention and education:**  
OptumRx will aggressively promote appropriate use of opioid drugs. Teach both doctors and patients about risks, storage, safer alternatives, and proper disposal.
- 2. Minimizing early exposure:**  
The powerful OptumRx claims system can prevent abuse with effective utilization management strategies in the pharmacy.
- 3. Provider surveillance:**  
OptumRx will leverage its' national database so that doctors and pharmacies who over-prescribe or illegally supply opioids are found and stopped.



- 4. Identifying and supporting those at-risk:**  
OptumRx has advanced analytic capabilities to stratify patients based upon risk of abuse. Then, Optum clinical resources help ensure proper clinical intervention and support.
- 5. Manage afflicted population:**  
OptumRx will ensure those with current or previous history of Opiate Use Disorder are properly monitored and managed with the most clinically effective treatment options.

## References

1. Annual Revenue of Public Health 2015; 36: 559-574)
2. National Institute on Drug Abuse, May, 2014.
3. Pain Medicine 2014; 15: 1450-1454)
4. HR Today. Combatting the Prescription Drug Crisis. March 1, 2016. Accessed at: <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/0316/pages/combating-the-prescription-drug-crisis.aspx> on 09.23.2016.
5. CDC – [www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/health\\_policy](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/health_policy)
6. Shatterproof, March 2016.
7. JAMA Intern Med. 2016;176(7):1027-1029)
8. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. Results from the 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings. Sept. 2014.)
9. Ann Intern Med. 2016; 164:1-9)