

Can We Innovate Our Way Out of the Opioid Epidemic?

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INTRODUCTION

- Opioids are drugs that act on the nervous system to relieve pain
- Continued use and abuse can result in addiction
- For health care professionals, many aspects of opioid addiction and other substance use disorders present challenges
- The ANA has formally recognized opioid addiction as a significant public health crisis and states that “As healthcare providers practicing on the front lines of the opioid epidemic, registered nurses are qualified and well positioned to play a leading role in assessing, diagnosing, and managing patients battling addiction.” (The Sentinel Watch, 2019)

SIGNIFICANCE

- “According to the CDC, 2014 was a record year for deaths from drug overdoses, with more than 60 percent of these deaths resulting from drugs classified as an opioid. Between 2000 and 2014, close to half a million Americans died from drug overdose—that is roughly equivalent to 78 deaths per day.” (The Sentinel Watch, 2019)
- “Epidemiologists at the CDC say that rising rates of opioid prescriptions are a driving factor in the 15-year increase in opioid deaths.” (The Sentinel Watch, 2019)
- “Opioid drug-related overdose has risen steadily over the past two decades, becoming one of the leading causes of death in the United States.” (American Nurses Association, p. 1)
- “Nearly 70% of the 67,367 deaths in 2018 involved an opioid. From 2017 to 2018, there were significant changes in opioid-involved death rates: Opioid-involved death rates decreased by 2%. Prescription-opioid involved death rates decreased by 13.5%. Heroin-involved death rates decreased by 4%. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020)

POSITION STATEMENT

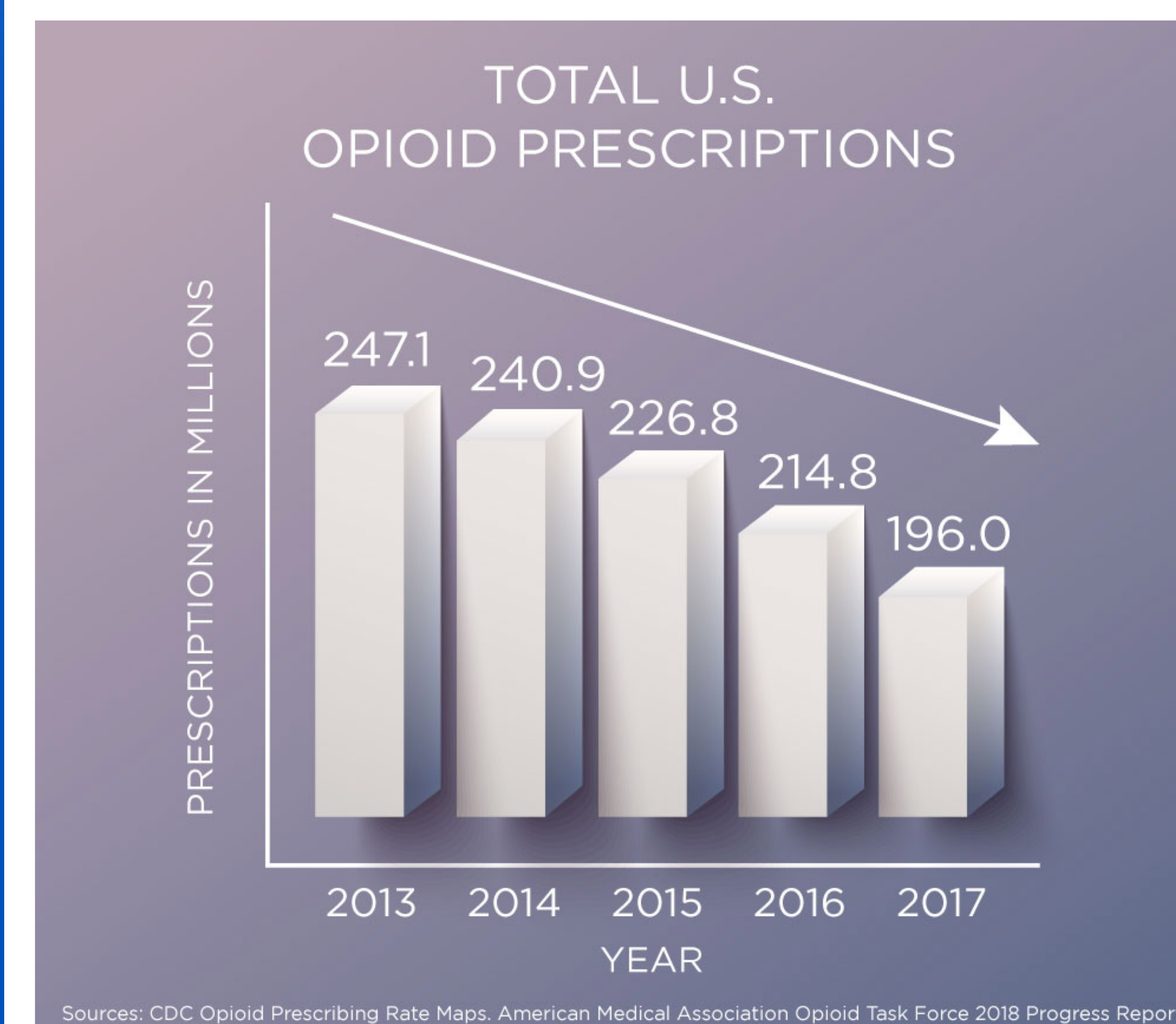
- As a healthcare system, there is a way to change the trend of the opioid epidemic.
- Collaboration and teamwork for patients, as well as education can help healthcare out of the opioid issue.

SUPPORT FOR POSITION

- “The opioid epidemic is a serious public health issue, resulting from increased use of prescription and nonprescription opioid medications. Drug overdose is a leading cause of death in the United States. As nurses, we have a responsibility to get involved and educate patients and the public about the current opioid epidemic.” (Lippincott, 2020)
- Registered nurses practice in a variety of direct-care positions and educate patients and families on the risks vs benefits of pain treatment options
- “Issues surrounding abuse and misuse of prescription opioids must be balanced with the real and legitimate needs of those seeking treatment for pain. Developing abuse deterrent formulations (ADFs) is an important tool in preventing abuse.” ((American Nurses Association, p. 1)
- “Effective MAT (Medication-Assisted Treatment) programs for opioid addiction can decrease overdose deaths and reduce costs. It also reduces transmissions of HIV and hepatitis C related to IV drug use, and associated criminal activity when combined with behavioral therapy.” (American Nurses Association, "Opioid Epidemic")
- As educators and patient advocates, nurses are in a unique position to help patients with non-opioid pain management including other medication modalities, regional anesthetic interventions, surgery, psychological therapies, rehabilitative/physical therapy, and complementary and alternative medicine. (American Nurses Association, p. 2)

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

- “Use the medication reconciliation process as an opportunity to educate your patients about issues like tolerance, physical dependence, opioid misuse, and drug diversion.” (The Sentinel Watch, 2019)
- “Registered nurses are on the front lines of addressing the epidemic by educating patients to understand the risks and benefits of pain treatment options, to include opioids, and by recognizing those at risk for substance use disorder.” (American Nurses Association, p. 1)
- “ANA lauded the vision outlined in the National Pain Strategy, specifically: prevention, early recognition, and intervention of pain issues in primary care settings; a person-centered, interdisciplinary approach to pain management; and support for pain self-management strategies.” (American Nurses Association, p. 2)
- A program, ATLO (Alternatives to Opioids) has decreased opioid use in the emergency department by almost 50% (Stringer, William, & Nelson, 2019)



CONCLUSION

- “Medical personnel, emergency departments, first responders, public safety officials, mental health and substance use treatment providers, community-based organizations, public health, and members of the community bring awareness, resources, and expertise to address this complex and fast-moving epidemic. Together, we can better coordinate efforts to prevent opioid overdoses and deaths.” (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020)
- Healthcare should use a more holistic approach to pain management, instead of misusing opioids, to increase patient safety and health.

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