

To: Board of Trustees, MetroWest Health Foundation

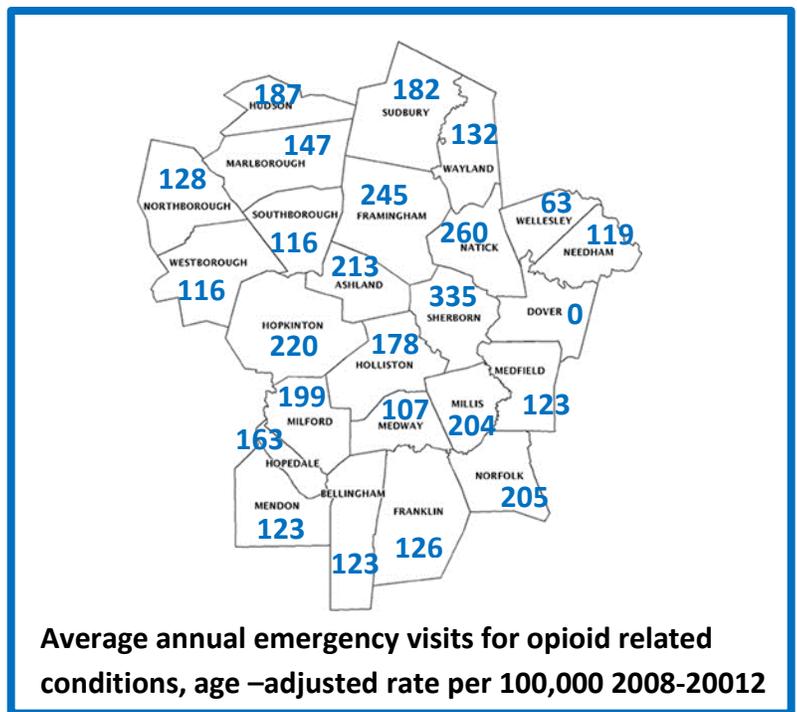
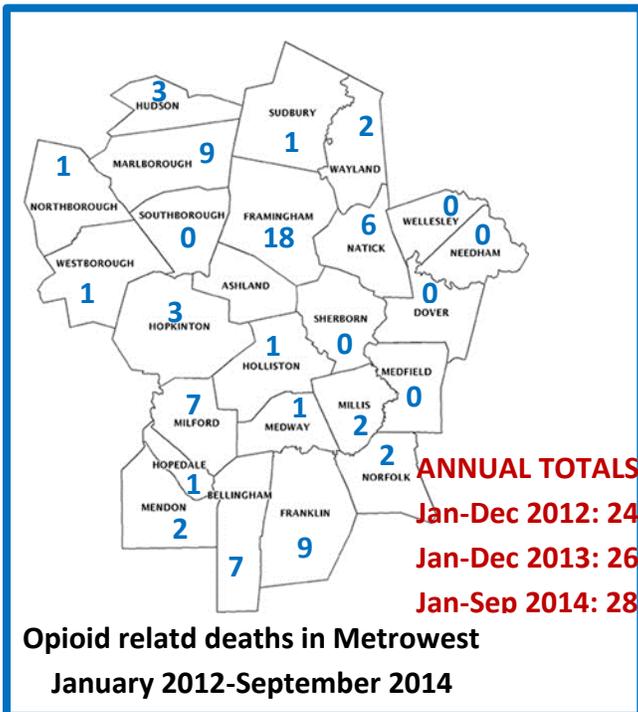
From: Michelle Blanchard, LMHC; Peter Desimone, MSW; Leigh Ann Gaudette, LICSW; Markus Henrichs, CPS and Susan Schwarz, MHCA, PA

Re: Opioid Crisis in MetroWest

Date: June 25, 2015

What is the dimension of the opioid problem throughout Massachusetts and in MetroWest?

According to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, there were 978 unintentional opioid overdose deaths in Massachusetts in 2013.¹ In 2014 DPH reported 1008 fatal opioid overdose deaths which was 33% higher than 2012.² Middlesex County deaths increased from 154 in 2013 to 212 in 2014.³ More than 65 people have died of opioid overdose in Middlesex County this year.⁴ In MetroWest, the problem is increasing each year as shown below in (Opioid related Deaths in MetroWest)⁵. In other MetroWest data, the effects of opioid use is evident in the number of emergency room visits in the different towns.⁶ In addition to deaths caused by opioid use, DPH Commissioner reported there were at least 2000 inpatient admissions and over 4500 emergency room visits in Massachusetts in 2013 related to opioid use.⁷



The Foundation engaged the services of the MetroWest Health Leadership Opioid Working Group to develop recommendations for dealing with the opioid crisis in the MetroWest area. We recommend the Foundation involve community stakeholders to respond to this crisis. Specifically, we recommend the Foundation convene a coalition in MetroWest to develop a comprehensive three point response:

- 1) Education and Tracking Strategies for prevention of opioid abuse

¹ Bharel, Monica. 2015 May 18. Opioid Painkiller Abuse, Retrieved from: <https://theforum.sph.harvard.edu/events/opioid-painkiller-abuse/>

² Data Brief: Fatal Opioid-related Overdose among MA residents MDPH April 2015

³ April 29, 2015 The Berkshire Eagle, Retrieved from http://www.berkshireeagle.com/editorials/ci_28015583/our-opinion-growing-death-toll-due-opioids-is

⁴ Thompson, Barry Arlington Patch staff April 14, 2015 Retrieved from <http://patch.com/massachusetts/arlington/already-2015-more-65-opiate-overdose-deaths-middlesex-county>

⁵ <http://www.mwhealth.org/Who-We-Are/Foundation-News/View-Article/ArticleId/16/opioid-related-overdose-deaths-a-public-health-crisis>

⁶ Massachusetts Department of Public Health

⁷ Bharel, Monica. 2015 May 18. Opioid Painkiller Abuse, Retrieved from <https://theforum.sph.harvard.edu/events/opioid-painkiller-abuse/>.

- 2) Expand education and access to Narcan programs throughout MetroWest
- 3) Promote underutilized evidence based practices such as Medication Assisted Treatment

Potential community partners that have an active interest or stake in the opioid crisis

SAMSHA describes that building an effective prevention strategy within a community begins with a clear understanding of community needs and depends on the involvement of community members in all stages of the planning process.⁸ Local police, fire departments, schools, the District Attorney's Office, the Probation Department, defense attorneys, Judges, legal advocates, clinicians, peer recovery and support groups, families and members of the community all have a stake in dealing with the opioid crisis. Coalitions that currently exist in the area include the Emotional Health and Substance Abuse Taskforce, the Framingham Youth Development Coalition; and the Framingham State University Drug & Alcohol Prevention Task Force. These existing coalitions may be a partner in addressing this rising issue.

What role could the Foundation and others play in addressing the issue?

Parties interested in working towards positive change and solutions to this crisis are often unaware of the work of others in the community. In isolation, a person may search for information others have gathered, duplicate efforts or be less effective without the support or expertise of others. The Metrowest Foundation is positioned in the community to play a crucial role in bringing together stakeholders, disseminating relevant data, encouraging partnerships between behavioral health/substance use specialists and area health facilities and prescribers. The Foundation can also help to decrease stigma by framing the crisis as a health issue, a medical disease that requires treatment and support.

Step 1: Education and Tracking Strategies in MetroWest

Four out of five people who began heroin use in the past twelve months previously abused prescription medication.⁹ Factors impacting this trend include prescriber and patient lack of awareness of safe guidelines for pain management as well as a lack of prescriber training to assess for and respond to a patient's history or risk for substance use.¹⁰ Massachusetts offers a Prescription Monitoring Program (MA PMP), which collects dispensing information of at risk medications and is a tool for prescribers to better understand a patient's prescription use history. All opioid prescribers are mandated to enroll in the program, but adherence is relatively low. To date, 65% of physicians are currently enrolled, with the remainder expected to sign up by the fall of 2015.¹¹

Recommendations for Education and Tracking Strategies in MetroWest:

- Encourage prescribers to participate in MA PMP program, comply with safe pain management prescribing guidelines and encourage partnerships between area prescribers and substance use treatment specialists.
- Utilize the MA PMP for community based data analysis. Analyze MetroWest drug trends to identify need areas and develop effective interventions.
- Increase education and awareness of families and schools to the risks related to opioid pain medication use and storage. Increase awareness of signs and symptoms of opioid abuse, prevention and treatment.

Step 2: Expand Naloxone (Narcan) Programs

Narcan is the treatment of choice for reversing an opioid overdose. It gives people another chance to overcome their addiction. There is no potential for abuse. Narcan works by reversing sedation and respiratory depression in a person who is overdosing.

Recommendations to the Foundation

⁸ SAMSHA's Strategic prevention Framework (SPF). Retrieved at gov/access-resources/about-strategic-prevention-framework-spf

⁹ Lazar, Kay April 28, 2015 Retrieved from <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2015/04/28/more-than-people-died-from-heroin-and-other-opioids-state-figures-show/697gYjFZS6DnuKhREzfEcO/story.html>

¹⁰ Alford, Daniel. May 12, 2015. Retrieved at <https://www.masspartnership.com/pdf/2-1-Pain-Management-Opioid-Addiction.pdf>

¹¹ Retrieved from <http://www.mass.gov/governor/press-office/press-releases/steps-to-combat-opioid-addiction-crisis-announced.html>

- Work with stakeholders to expand funding, training, and education for first responders throughout MetroWest. In 2014, the MetroWest Health Foundation awarded a grant to fund first responders in five police departments in MetroWest (Framingham, Southborough, Marlborough, Natick, and Holliston) saving 22 lives.¹² Without such funding, communities have struggled to manage the skyrocketing cost of Narcan on their own. Attorney General Maura Healey is concerned that this spike in the cost of Narcan will create a barrier for towns to purchase Narcan for their first responders¹³.
- Support the expansion of bystander training and **Overdose Education and Naloxone Distribution (OEND)**. “Since December of 2007, DPH has implemented overdose education and intra-nasal naloxone distribution in community-based settings. These programs have trained potential bystanders (drug users, friends, family members) on how to reduce overdose risk, recognize signs of an overdose, access emergency medical services, and administer intra-nasal naloxone. Each participant is eligible to receive an overdose prevention kit which includes instructions, two syringes pre-filled with Naloxone, and a nasal atomization delivery device. Between December 2007 and March 2014, OEND programs trained over 22,500 potential bystanders and documented over 2,655 opioid overdose reversals.”¹⁴ Learn to Cope (a support group for families of addicts) held in Framingham, offers bystander training. Our group recommends that bystander training be expanded in the MetroWest area.
- DPH BSAS recently released a request for information to consider options for supporting pharmacy access to Narcan for clients in BSAS-funded treatment programs to cover costs of Narcan not covered by the clients’ health insurance. The question DPH is asking is “How could BSAS facilitate greater access to naloxone rescue kits dispensed from pharmacies for patients in addiction treatment.” The responses are due by June 30, 2015. We recommend that the Foundation support this effort to expand access to Narcan.¹⁵

Step 3: Promote evidence based practices such as Medication Assisted Treatment

Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) is the use of medication combined with behavioral therapies, counseling and a whole patient approach to the treatment of substance use disorders. The most common medications used are methadone, buprenorphine (Suboxone) and extended release Naltrexone (Vivitrol). Research regarding efficacy indicates:

- All medication for treatment of moderate and severe addiction to opioids have shown clear clinical evidence of effectiveness in reducing opioid use and opioid related symptoms of withdrawal and experience of cravings.¹⁶
- All medications are cost-effective in that use reduces admissions for drug related issues and health concerns; including emergency department admissions.¹⁷
- Medication use in treatment leads to an increase in use of outpatient therapy and longer engagement in services. Effectiveness of these medications occurs only when used as maintenance treatment. There is no evidence of enduring benefits from medications when used in “detoxification only” regimens without ongoing treatment and recovery supports.¹⁸

Comprehensive MAT is offered in MetroWest through Spectrum services in Milford, Framingham and Southbridge, with same day access twice a week. Other individual prescribers certified to provide MAT lack the support services linked to successful outcomes.¹⁹ Twice a week same day access does not meet the communities need to catch a person at the moment they are agreeable to seek treatment. Accelerated admission is linked to higher retention and lower repeated

¹² Petroni, Susan Framingham Patch May 2 2014 retrieved from <http://patch.com/massachusetts/framingham/metrowest-health-foundation-to-fund-nasal-naloxone-programs>

¹³ MacQuarrie, Brian Boston Globe April 20, 2015 retrieved from <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2015/04/19/healey-investigates-rising-price-for-drug-that-reverses-overdoses/Wav71qeW4gbMAwb9bcx2tl/story.html>

¹⁴ <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dph/substance-abuse/opioid/overdoserresponsestrategies.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.commbuys.com/bso/external/bidDetail.sdo?docId=BD-15-1031-BSAS0-BSA01-00000004343&external=true&parentUrl=bid>

¹⁶ MI Chalk, (2015). Systemic Barriers to Use of Medications in Addiction Treatment. Retrieved from <https://ncc.expoplanner.com/files/13.../A2Chalk1.pdf>

¹⁷ Baser O., Chalk M, Fiellin DA, Gastfriend DR (June 2011). Cost and Utilization outcomes of opioid dependence treatments. American Journal of Managed Care Suppl 8:s235-48 Retrieved from <http://www.tresearch.org/download/issue/briefs/briefOpioidsMAT.pdf>

¹⁸ MI Chalk, (2015). Systemic Barriers to Use of Medications in Addiction Treatment. Retrieved from <https://ncc.expoplanner.com/files/13.../A2Chalk1.pdf>

¹⁹ Kennerson King, J., Williams A., Turton S., Swann, D.R. (2015). The New Frontier Addictions and Primary Care Integration. Retrieved from <https://ncc.expoplanner.com/files/13/SessionFilesHandouts/A1Williams1.pdf> and <http://www.spectrumhealthsystems.org/programs/opiate-treatment>

heroin use. Delayed access can have negative outcomes such as: continued opiate use, increase exposure to risk of arrest, infectious disease, physical and mental health issues and increased risk of overdose death.²⁰

Recommendations related to MAT in MetroWest

- Expand sites offering comprehensive MAT services in MetroWest
- Increase capacity for same day access to MAT and substance use treatment services to 7 days a week
- Increase number of prescribers trained /certified in MAT
- Increase partnerships between behavioral health providers and primary care physicians/health centers to better offer whole person focused, MAT, counseling, behavioral health and peer support

How to measure success

- Reduce deaths in MetroWest by 50% in two years.
- Increase Same Day Access to substance use services from two days a week to seven days a week.
- Increase participation in the education of providers in best practice guidelines in prescribing opioids for pain management.
- Utilize the MetroWest Adolescent Health Survey to measure adolescent use and assess need areas

Potential Pitfalls/Risks

We have identified the following pitfalls to our recommendations. Area prescribers and law enforcement may be resistant to changing their practices; impeding potential progress. The stigma attached to substance use disorders can impact public perception and commitment to creating solutions to this crisis. Substance Use is often seen as a moral failing instead of a health crisis. An essential shift in our community's understanding and perception of substance use disorders may need to occur to allow for increased stakeholder support, increased political prioritization and increased funding for and access to necessary treatment and support services.

The opioid crisis is an epidemic with serious impact to MetroWest communities. The Foundation could serve a vital role in coordinating a community-level systemic response. A coalition of community stakeholders working together to establish and implement effective strategies to educate, improve access to care and promote evidence-based treatment could serve to arrest or decrease the opioid crisis in MetroWest and save lives.

²⁰ Gryczynski, J. MA; Schwartz, R. MD; Salkever, D PhD; Mitchell, S.G. PhD; Jaffe, J. (2011). Patterns 1 admission delays to outpatient methadone treatment in the United States. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment* 2011 December 41 (4): 431-439. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3205308/>