



THE COLLEGE ON PROBLEMS OF DRUG DEPENDENCE, INC.

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May 17, 2017

Thomas E. Price, M.D.
Secretary, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Ave SW
Washington, DC 20201
Secretary@HHS.gov

Dear Secretary Price:

I am writing on behalf of the College on Problems of Drug Dependence Inc. (CPDD) in response to your recent comments about medication-assisted treatments for Opioid Use Disorder. CPDD is the longest standing scholarly society in the United States that is devoted to issues surrounding substance use disorders. Its membership has a substantial history and current work supporting basic science as well as treatment research, including the study of opioid pharmacotherapies. The College has over 1000 members, and serves as an interface among governmental, industrial and academic communities maintaining liaisons with regulatory and research agencies as well as educational, treatment, and prevention facilities in the drug abuse field.

As you are aware, abuse of opioids is at an epidemic level and is associated with unprecedented levels of morbidity and mortality. Such a widespread problem has prompted a multi-pronged response including changes in opioid prescribing practices, distribution of naloxone to first responders, and increased access to medication-assisted treatment. Many scientists in the CPDD community have conducted the seminal research on medications, such as methadone, buprenorphine and naltrexone, for treating Opioid Use Disorder. This research has demonstrated that these medications are a critical component of treatment. They help to prevent relapse and allow patients to reintegrate into mainstream society and lead fulfilling and productive lives. At the same time, research shows that they are protective in preventing overdose death if a patient does use opioids illicitly. While we are grateful that you are addressing this serious public health concern, we urge you to reconsider your position about the role of medications in helping to manage this problem, both for individual patients and for society at large. We also urge you to support research on newer, safer and more effective medications and/or approaches for treating substance use disorders. We are happy to serve as a resource for you and the Department of HHS as you continue to work toward addressing this serious public health issue.

Respectfully,

Leonard Howell, PhD
President, The College on Problems of Drug Dependence