



The Opioid Tsunami: Would the Multi-Prong Approach Work?

Zehra Surani^{1*} and Salim Surani²

¹*Pulmonary Associate of Corpus Christi, Executive Director, its Your Life Foundation*

²*Clinical Professor of Medicine, Texas A and M University, Texas*

***Corresponding Author:** Zehra Surani, Pulmonary Associate of Corpus Christi, Executive Director, its Your Life Foundation.

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In the United State the opiate crisis has become an epidemic plaguing our youth and countrymen. Opioids overdose seem to be the worst drug problem in the history of the United States. According to the report published in the British Journal of Pharmacology, in 2014, drug overdose, which is largely driven by opioids, surpassed automobile accidents as the number one cause of accidental death for the first time in the history of the United States [1]. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), from 1999 to 2017, over 700,000 people died from drug overdoses. CDC further estimates that 130 people die from an opioid overdose every day [2]. Everyone working whether at an individual level, County level, State level, or at the National platform are trying to look for solutions to tackle the opioid epidemic.

Opioid epidemic is not only a public health crisis, but it is also a tremendous financial burden. According to a report issued by Altarum, a “nonprofit health research and consulting institute, “the opioid epidemic’s economic cost in the U.S. from 2001 to 2017 exceeded \$1 trillion US dollars.” The report also projected that the opioid crisis would cost the U.S. economy an additional \$500 billion by 2020 [3].

Where should one start? At the doctor’s office? At hospital? at home? at school? at a place of worship? at State level? Or pass a legislation? The answer is all of the above! Addiction is not an individual problem, as one says it takes a village to raise a child in the same manner in will take a village to eradicate this epidemic. Curriculum needs to be devised that focuses on social and emo-

tional wellbeing in the schools, focusing on substance abuse and addiction. Seminars need to be conducted for parents and families educating them about signs of addiction and how to tackle it, and the same goes for physician and hospital administrators to provide education and support. To be practical, we know pain is inevitable when an individual goes through surgery, have some other physically debilitating condition, or in chronic pain that requires pain medication or controlled substance, but looking into alternatives and providing education and support with an empathetic arm is extremely crucial for the health of the patient and for the entire community. It is not just one person who suffers that gets addicted... it is the entire family that suffers along with him or her.

Along with education, support, and controlling the opioid use at the prescriptive level, one also needs to work on eradicating the public stigma. Public stigma is propelled by creating stereotypes about the people with opioid use disorders. The people with opioid use is perceived as dangerousness or one with moral failings, which further transforms into negative attitudes and behaviors towards that individual [4]. According to Tsai and colleague, public stigma is a fundamental hindrance in the path of recovery to the opioid overdose crisis response. Instead of looking at it as crisis we need to look at it as an opportunity to provide support and educate. Creative collaboration needs to devise at all level from local to state to national eliminating the stigma with the human-centered approach! We feel, now is the time to address the elephant in the room together with all the stake holders involved. Indeed, it is a community issue and has to be addressed as a community together.

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