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Media Contact
Rebecca Reid
410-212-3843
rreid@schmidtpa.com

ASAM Launches New Training Module for Treating Opioid Use Disorder in the Emergency Department; New Report on Legal Risks to Hospital EDs Underscores Need for Education

Hospital emergency departments that fail to adopt evidence-based practices for SUD can violate certain federal laws, according to new report from Legal Action Center

Rockville, MD - The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) today launched a new online training module for prescribers in the emergency department (ED) seeking to initiate buprenorphine for the treatment of opioid use disorder (OUD). Through interactive and application-focused learning, the OUD Mini-Course: Treatment in the Emergency Department training module will provide essential education to empower prescribers in EDs to better identify, manage, and respond to patients with OUD.

ASAM’s new training module was officially launched the same day the Legal Action Center (LAC) released its new report, “EMERGENCY: Hospitals are Violating Federal Law by Denying Required Care for Substance Use Disorders in Emergency Departments.” The report warns that failure by hospital EDs to adopt evidence-based practices for patients with substance use disorder (SUD) can violate federal laws that require EDs to provide certain medical services and prohibit discrimination based on disability, race, and ethnicity.

“The new report from the Legal Action Center outlines what many healthcare professionals, patients, and families already knew: the failure of some hospital emergency departments to adopt evidence-based practices for individuals with a substance use disorder is dangerous for patients, creates frustrating roadblocks to care,
and exacerbates disparities,” said William Haning, MD, DLFAPA, DFASAM, president of ASAM. “With drug overdose deaths surging to an all-time high during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical for frontline hospital clinicians to understand how to screen for and diagnose substance use disorder and follow well-validated practices. ASAM is proud to help meet this need by offering essential education about identifying, managing, and responding to patients with opioid use disorder in the emergency department setting.”

To date, many hospitals have adopted evidence-based practices for treating patients with SUD in the ED setting, including screening for SUD and diagnosing it, offering to administer opioid agonist medications to patients with OUD (as appropriate), and facilitating referrals to ongoing care. According to the LAC report, however, far too many EDs only address the acute symptoms of substance use, and as a result, may be violating federal laws that require medical screening and stabilization, as well as laws that prohibit disability- and race-based discrimination.

The OUD Mini-Course: Treatment in the Emergency Department training module is now available online and can be accessed through ASAM’s e-Learning Center. ASAM will provide CME credit upon completion of the training module.

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About the American Society of Addiction Medicine
The American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), founded in 1954, is a professional medical society representing over 6,600 physicians, clinicians, and associated professionals in the field of addiction medicine. ASAM is dedicated to increasing access and improving the quality of addiction treatment, educating physicians and the public, supporting research and prevention, and promoting the appropriate role of physicians in the care of patients with addiction. For more information, visit www.ASAM.org.