



Kentucky Society of Addiction Medicine

A Chapter of American Society of Addiction Medicine

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June 9, 2020

Governor Andy Beshear
700 Capitol Avenue, Suite 100,
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Re: Improved Access to Medications for Addiction Treatment for Individuals with Opioid Use Disorder

Dear Governor Beshear,

On behalf of the Kentucky Society of Addiction Medicine (KYSAM), the medical specialty society representing physicians and other clinicians in Kentucky who specialize in the prevention and treatment of addiction, I would like to take this opportunity to urge you to consider taking executive action to ensure improved access to all Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved medications for the treatment of opioid use disorder (OUD). More specifically, as an organization that is dedicated to increasing access to and improving the quality of addiction treatment for patients in Kentucky, KYSAM believes lifting prior authorization restrictions on FDA-approved medications for the treatment of OUD is one of the best ways to ensure patients can receive timely, effective, and evidence-based treatment for OUD.

The addiction crisis in America has resulted in a devastating loss of life. In 2018 alone 1,333 Kentuckians died from drug overdoses, most of whom likely suffered from OUD.ⁱ This crisis may be further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Across the country, several states, counties and localities are reporting increases in opioid overdoses and deaths.ⁱⁱ Historically, after traumatic national events such as 9/11 or hurricane Katrina, there is an uptick in those suffering from substance use disorders (SUD), including OUD, and mental health issues.ⁱⁱⁱ Therefore, it is vitally important that the state of Kentucky take action to improve access to addiction treatment to prevent a potential surge in overdoses and deaths.

Prior authorization, which is used by Kentucky Medicaid and its contracted managed care organizations (MCOs), has been shown to disrupt delivery of care by creating a delay between the time a clinician prescribes a medication and the receipt of that medication by the patient.^{iv} Unfortunately, many FDA-approved medications for addiction treatment are subject to prior authorization by Kentucky's Medicaid program and MCOs. This situation can be a life and death matter in the case of addiction and non-evidence-based utilization controls, such as prior authorization, can inappropriately force patients to either wait for or forgo treatment entirely.

It is vital that you take immediate action to help reduce barriers to accessing effective medications for the treatment of OUD. This is especially critical now due to COVID-19 and its impact on people suffering from addiction. Please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Michael



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Fletcher at (859) 462-6065 or at dr.michaelfletcher@gmail.com if KYSAM can be of any service to you. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Michael Fletcher, MD

Michael Fletcher, MD
President, Kentucky Society of Addiction Medicine

ⁱ Office of Drug Control Policy. (2019) 2018 Fatality Overdose Report. The Justice & Public Safety Cabinet for the Commonwealth of Kentucky, Frankfort, Kentucky. Available at

<https://odcp.ky.gov/Reports/2018%20Kentucky%20Overdose%20Fatality%20Report%20.pdf>

ⁱⁱ The American Medical Association. (2020). Issue brief: Reports of increases in opioid-related overdose and other concerns during COVID pandemic. Chicago, Illinois: AMA. Available at [https://www.ama-](https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2020-05/issue-brief-increases-in-opioid-related-overdose.pdf)

[assn.org/system/files/2020-05/issue-brief-increases-in-opioid-related-overdose.pdf](https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2020-05/issue-brief-increases-in-opioid-related-overdose.pdf)

ⁱⁱⁱ National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2001). Stress and Substance Abuse: A Special Report After the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks. Rockville, Maryland: NIDA. Available at

<https://archives.drugabuse.gov/publications/stress-substance-abuse-special-report-after-911-terrorist-attacks>

^{iv} The American Medical Association. (2018). 2018 AMA Prior Authorization (PA)

Physician Survey. Chicago, Illinois: AMA. Available at <https://www.ama-assn.org/system/files/2019-02/prior-auth-2018.pdf>