Coalition of Public Health Organizations and Supply Chain Partners Launch Educational Initiative to Reduce Opioid Abuse and Misuse

**Distributors, Pharmacies, Providers and Caregivers Join Together in Broad Educational Initiative**

**ARLINGTON, Va., February 6, 2018** — Today, leading partners across healthcare, public health and the pharmaceutical supply chain joined together to launch **Allied Against Opioid Abuse** (AAOA), a national education and awareness initiative to help combat the nation’s opioid abuse epidemic.

AAOA is a collaborative effort that brings together key stakeholders, including the Healthcare Distribution Alliance (HDA), the Caregiver Action Network (CAN), Mental Health America (MHA), National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations (NASPA), National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE) and the PA Foundation, to engage providers, pharmacists and the public in education about the rights, risks and responsibilities associated with prescription opioids. HDA is providing the initial funding to support the formation of the organization.

In 2016, **more than 11 million Americans misused** prescription opioids. While the public health and medical communities have taken a number of steps to reduce the decades-long trend of overprescribing, the continued prevalence of opioids in pain management calls for broader education and awareness to help prevent abuse and misuse before it begins.

Experts have highlighted the growing need and importance of public education efforts on this critical issue. More than eight in ten Americans also think renewed provider education combined with public education and awareness programs are critical to the fight against the opioid epidemic, according to a **survey** from Kaiser Family Foundation.

“We all have a role to play in developing and advancing meaningful and responsible solutions to address the serious and complex issues raised by the opioid abuse epidemic. It starts with education,” said John M. Gray, President and CEO, HDA. “By combining our voices and leveraging our networks, together we can help reduce the misuse, overuse and abuse of prescription opioids.”

AAOA has put **tools and resources** in place to help address the opioid abuse crisis by encouraging safe use, storage and disposal among patients and their families. Additionally, AAOA will convene discussions with community partners to create awareness, share information, foster new approaches and ultimately reduce prescription opioid abuse and misuse.

“Our industry recognizes there isn’t one simple solution that will address the opioid abuse epidemic,” continued Gray. “That is why we are bringing together a diverse set of partners that are strongly committed to educating, raising awareness and implementing solutions to ensure patients know how to safely and properly access, use and dispose opioids. Through AAOA, we will create and distribute educational materials that are tailored for each unique part of the healthcare community — from patients and caregivers, to pharmacists to prescribers.”
“Family caregivers are often responsible for loved ones’ prescriptions and can play an integral role in ensuring the safe storage and disposal of opioid medications,” said John A. Schall, Chief Executive Officer, CAN. “We are proud to work with AAOA on programs that educate these invaluable members of the community.”

“Mental Health America is pleased to partner with AAOA,” said Paul Gionfriddo, President and Chief Executive Officer, MHA. “By working together to develop a national education and awareness platform, we can hopefully prevent opioid abuse and misuse before it happens and ultimately save lives.”

“We are working with AAOA to help solve this crisis one patient-healthcare provider conversation at a time,” said Ray Bullman, Executive Vice President, NCPIE. “AAOA will provide patients and healthcare providers with educational tools and resources to communicate effectively about pain management and potential risks, rights and responsibilities to ensure that prescription opioids are used safely and appropriately when they are part of the treatment regimen.”

“Pharmacists play a vital role in patient access to, and appropriate use of, opioids,” said Rebecca Snead, Chief Executive Officer, NASPA. “We hope that AAOA’s efforts can ensure pharmacists have helpful resources to provide appropriate pain management to patients with legitimate needs for opioids, and also help to minimize misuse and abuse.”

“PAs are on the frontlines of patient care and are often seeing the opioid epidemic firsthand in their communities,” said James F. Cawley, MPH, PA-C, President, PA Foundation. “By partnering with AAOA we will provide our members with resources for their own awareness as well as patient education tools.”

“Opioids, along with other therapies, can and will continue to be an appropriate tool for reducing and managing pain. For that reason, it is important for prescribers, patients and their caregivers to take the time to have an open conversation so there is complete understanding about opiate prescriptions and their side-effects, appropriate use, storage and disposal. The PA Foundation is proud to be part of AAOA’s efforts to expand awareness and educate patients about opioids,” added Cawley.

To learn more about Allied Against Opioid Abuse, visit www.AgainstOpioidAbuse.org.

Allied Against Opioid Abuse is a national education and awareness initiative to help prevent abuse and misuse of prescription opioids. Founded by the Healthcare Distribution Alliance, the initiative is a collaborative effort with diverse partners across the pharmaceutical supply chain, as well as organizations that are experts in public health and healthcare, including Caregiver Action Network, Mental Health America, National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations, National Council on Patient Information and Education, and the PA Foundation. Our goal is to contribute to solving the opioid crisis in a meaningful way by educating patients about their rights, risks and responsibilities. To learn more visit www.AgainstOpioidAbuse.org or follow us on Twitter: @AAOA_Tweets.

Healthcare Distribution Alliance (HDA) is the national organization representing primary pharmaceutical distributors — the vital link between the nation's pharmaceutical manufacturers and more than 200,000 pharmacies, hospitals, long-term care facilities, clinics and others nationwide.
Caregiver Action Network (CAN) is the nation’s leading family caregiver organization working to improve the quality of life for the more than 90 million Americans who care for loved ones with chronic conditions, disabilities, disease, or the frailties of old age.

Mental Health America (MHA) is the nation’s leading community-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing the needs of those living with mental illness and to promoting the overall mental health of all Americans.

National Alliance of State Pharmacy Associations (NASPA) is dedicated to enhancing the success of state pharmacy associations in their efforts to advance the profession of pharmacy. NASPA promotes leadership, sharing, learning, and policy exchange among its members and pharmacy leaders nationwide.

National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE) is a nonprofit coalition of diverse consumer, government, patient advocacy, health professional and public health organizations working together to improve health and stimulate conversation between healthcare professionals and patients about the safe, appropriate use of medicines.

PA Foundation empowers PAs to improve health through philanthropy and service and is the charitable arm of the American Academy of PAs (AAPA), representing a profession of more than 123,000 certified PAs across all medical and surgical specialties throughout the U.S. and on American military bases around the world.

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