

August 25, 2016

VADM Vivek H. Murthy
Surgeon General
United States Public Health Service
Tower Building
Plaza Level 1, Room 100
1101 Wootton Parkway
Rockville, MD 20852

Dear Dr. Murthy:

On behalf of our 159,000 members, we are pleased to register our support for the Surgeon General's Turn the Tide campaign. This national campaign will complement our ongoing efforts to increase professional awareness about the widespread abuse of opioid pain medications and mobilize prescribers to take action.

The misuse and abuse of opioid pain relievers—such as hydrocodone (Vicodin® and Lortab®) and oxycodone (OxyContin® and Percocet®)—has reached epidemic proportions. In 2014, over 47,000 people died from drug overdoses, and 40 percent of those (18,893 deaths) involved opioid analgesics.¹ This doesn't count the nearly 2 million Americans who reported abusing or being dependent on prescription pain relievers.²

As prescribers of opioid pain medications, dentists have a role to play in keeping these drugs from becoming a source of harm. Turn the Tide complements what the ADA has been doing for several years to raise professional awareness about this issue—and mobilize dentists to take action.

Since at least 2012, the ADA has offered free continuing education courses on safe and effective opioid prescribing. We have also developed practical guides to help dentists screen patients for substance use disorders and refer them for appropriate treatment. Additionally, we have urged dentists to join several campaigns, such as National Recovery Month, to reduce the stigma associated with substance use disorders. These are the core tenets of the Turn the Tide pledge.

We are pleased to be joining forces to help turn the tide on the opioid epidemic that has been devastating our families and communities. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Robert J. Burns at 202-789-5176 or burnsr@ada.org. Information is also available at ADA.org/opioids.

Sincerely,

/s/

Carol Gomez Summerhays, D.D.S.
President

/s/

Kathleen T. O'Loughlin, D.M.D., M.P.H.
Executive Director

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August 25, 2016

Page 2

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Fact Sheet: NCHS Data on Drug-Poisoning Deaths: March 2016.

² Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. (2015). Behavioral health trends in the United States: Results from the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (HHS Publication No. SMA 15-4927, NSDUH Series H-50): 23.