

October 9, 2018

ADM Jerome M. Adams, M.D., M.P.H.  
United States Surgeon General  
200 Independence Avenue SW  
Suite 701H  
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Dr. Adams:

On behalf of our 161,000 dentist members, we would like to thank you issuing an update on the opioid crisis in the form of a new document, *Facing Addiction in America: The Surgeon General's Spotlight on Opioids*. This document, which is accompanied by an online clearinghouse, is the latest assembly of information and resources to help health care professionals and other stakeholders prevent opioid-related deaths and promote recovery from addiction.

In 1998, dentists accounted for 15.5 percent of all opioid prescriptions in the United States.<sup>1</sup> By 2012, that percentage had dropped to 6.4 percent.<sup>2</sup> And we believe opioid prescribing by dentists has dropped even further due to our efforts to raise awareness about the opioid crisis and promote safer and more effective pain management strategies.

Today, there is a new dental school accreditation standard that addresses substance use disorders and the impact of dental prescribing. Questions about drug addiction and pain management are being developed for the national dental board exams. And for the last seven years, the ADA has offered free continuing education on managing dental pain for patients who are at risk for drug overdose or addiction.

Moreover, the ADA now supports mandatory continuing education for opioid prescribers, statutory limits on number of pills that can be prescribed for initial acute pain, and use of prescription drug monitoring programs. We believe our policy is the first of its kind among major health professional organizations and a sign of how seriously we take this issue.

Again, thank you for assembling a new round of information and resources to promote more judicious opioid prescribing. We share your commitment to ending this tragic and entirely preventable public health crisis, and we applaud your leadership on this issue. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Robert J. Burns at 202-789-5176 or [burnsr@ada.org](mailto:burnsr@ada.org). Information is also available at [ADA.org/opioids](http://ADA.org/opioids).

Sincerely,

/s/

Joseph P. Crowley, D.D.S.  
President

/s/

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

JPC:KTO:rjb

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<sup>1</sup> Rigoni, GC. Drug Utilization for Immediate- and Modified Release Opioids in the U.S. Silver Spring: MD. Division of Surveillance, Research and Communication Support, Office of Drug Safety, Food and Drug Administration, 2003. (Citing IMS Health, National Prescription Audit Plus, Year 1998 to 2002, Excluding Long-Term Care and Mail Order Channels, Data Extracted August 2003.)

<sup>2</sup> Levy B, Paulozzi L, Mack KA, et al. Trends in Opioid Analgesic–Prescribing Rates by Specialty, U.S., 2007–2012. *Am J Prev Med* 2015; 49(3): 409-413. (Using data from IMS Health, National Prescription Audit, United States, 2012.)