

The Opioid Crisis On One Page

US "WAR ON DRUGS" -- began 50 years ago under the Nixon administration

- **2000-2010** - a few doctors and pharmacists operated pill mills contributing to the drug crisis
- **2010-2012** – Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs and DEA crackdown mostly suppressed pill mills. **Prescribing began to fall.**
- **Since 2010** the **opioid crisis is unrelated to so-called "overprescribing"** by doctors
 - **No current relationship between** opioid prescribing, hospital admissions or overdose mortality As prescribing has fallen dramatically (more than 44%) deaths from overdoses have more than tripled
 - Opioid crisis is dominated by illegal street Fentanyl, Heroin, Meth and alcohol
 - Likely **fewer than 3% of medical patients** later **develop substance abuse**
- **Present** – There **is** still a genuine "opioid crisis" in addiction, hospital admissions and deaths due to **counterfeit drugs** contaminated with **illegal fentanyl**

US CDC GOT THEIR STORY WRONG TWICE – first in 2016 and then 2022!

- 2016 CDC opioid guidelines, and 2022 revision over-emphasized risk and ignored benefits of opioid therapy
 - Recommendations based on weak and cherry-picked research, conflated, or misinterpreted findings
 - Ignored well-documented **wide range of individual opioid metabolism re: minimum effective dose** in favor of arbitrary maximum caps, ignoring research, clinician and pain specialist input
 - Tried to replace opioid therapy with "alternatives" that do NOT work for many patients
 - Writing team had unacknowledged conflicts of interest and anti-opioid political agenda

Results of bad "guidance"

- Real crisis is from social determinants of health - a crisis of hopelessness Pain specialists are fleeing the profession and many physicians refuse to treat pain patients,
- Currently, within chronic pain communities, there is crisis of under-treated pain leading to loss of income and productivity, severe drops in quality of life, and increased suicide

What must be done now?

- Publicly and prominently **repudiate** and **withdraw** the 2016 and 2022 CDC guidelines
- Actively lobby US states and DEA to repeal "guidelines" based law and practice standards
- Delegate practice standards to practicing clinicians and specialty academies
- Start over with unbiased writers and review teams, including clinicians in community practice, patients and their advocates