



Wednesday, Feb. 27, 2013

## For Physicians

### Uptick in overdose deaths driven by opioids

Drug overdose deaths increased for the 11th consecutive year in 2010, according to a [new analysis](#) published in the Journal of the American Medical Association. Leading the list of drugs responsible for these fatalities are prescription medications, especially opioid analgesics.

The analysis, conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), found that 38,329 people died from a drug overdose in 2010—up from 37,004 deaths in 2009 and 16,849 deaths in 1999. Nearly 60 percent of the overdose deaths in 2010 involved pharmaceutical drugs, with opioids associated with roughly 75 percent of these deaths.

Physicians can learn how to safely and effectively prescribe these painkillers by viewing two on-demand webinars from the AMA.

The [first webinar](#) explains how to identify patients who are appropriate candidates for opioid therapy and how to monitor and evaluate their response. Presenter Lynn R. Webster, MD, president-elect of the American Academy of Pain Medicine, shares eight tested principles for managing pain while avoiding misuse of prescription opioids.

The [second webinar](#) features an overview of the epidemiology of prescription drug overdoses and deaths, presented by speakers from the CDC. The webinar also explains the factors associated with an increased risk of unintentional overdoses from opioids as well as public policy and clinical practice strategies to promote responsible opioid prescribing.

These AMA-sponsored webinars are the first in a 12-part [series](#) on topics related to responsible opioid prescribing. They are part of a larger collaborative project called the Prescribers' Clinical Support System for Opioid Therapies, which offers additional prescribing resources [online](#).

Watch AMA Wire for information about participating in future webinars.

### Tonight: Learn how to boost value by benchmarking

An AMA webinar at 7 p.m. Eastern time Wednesday will explain how to benchmark practice performance to prepare for value-based payments. [Register today](#).

The fourth in a seven-part series hosted by the AMA Innovators Committee, this webinar will help physicians:

- Identify data sources and technology solutions to help measure performance.
- Assess the specific functionality they need in an electronic health record system or other technology solution to track performance and compare it against benchmarks.
- Pinpoint the measures most relevant to their practices.
- Understand how to track performance against benchmarks.
- Recognize suboptimal performance and implement a strategy for performance improvement.

Physician innovators will share insights they have learned from their own experiences benchmarking their practices' performance.

The first three webinars in the [series](#) are available for on-demand viewing. They cover such topics as understanding new delivery and payment models that support value-based care, providing team-based care to optimize practice workflow and increase value, and improving care coordination without moving to an employment model.

Physicians can earn continuing medical education credit in the form of AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™ by participating in or viewing any of the webinars in this series. Registration is free for AMA members; nonmembers can sign up for \$30. If you're not an AMA member, [join today](#).

Take advantage of new credit card offers from PenFed

AMA members have exclusive access to two special credit card offers available through Pentagon Federal Credit Union (PenFed).

[The AMA PenFed Premium Travel Rewards American Express® Card\\*](#) and [AMA PenFed Platinum Cash Rewards Visa® Card](#) both provide a 0 percent APR promotional balance transfer rate for 18 months on transfers made between now and March 31, 2013. After March 31, 2013, the APR for any new balance transfers will vary with the market based on the prime rate, which currently is 13.99 percent. A 3 percent balance transfer fee applies to each transfer (minimum \$10, maximum \$250). This transaction is subject to credit approval.

These offers are part of a collaboration between the AMA and PenFed through the [AMA Member Value Program](#). If you're not an AMA member, [join today](#) and take advantage of the many benefits that membership provides. As an AMA member, you are eligible to join PenFed to apply for these credit cards.

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