

November 6, 2017

Mr. Rahm Emanuel
Mayor, City of Chicago
121 North LaSalle Drive
Chicago, IL 60602

Mr. Dan Cronin
DuPage County Board Chairman
421 North County Farm Road
Wheaton, IL 60187

Ms. Toni Preckwinkle
President, Cook County Board of Commissioners
118 North Clark Street, #537
Chicago, IL 60602

Dear Chicago, Cook County and DuPage County Officials:

On behalf of our 161,000 members, we are pleased to respond to your letter of October 27, 2017 requesting to know what the ADA has been doing to help curb the widespread misuse and abuse of prescription opioid pain relievers. Like you, we are alarmed by the severity of opioid misuse and abuse in the United States, and we recognize that we can all do more to keep opioid pain medications from becoming a source of harm.

Dentistry continues to make progress on this issue. Nationally, the greatest percentage decrease in opioid prescribing rates between 2007 and 2012 occurred in emergency medicine (-8.9 percent) and dentistry (-5.7 percent).¹

Last year, then-ADA president Carol Gomez Summerhays published an [open message](#) urging dentists to take several specific actions to prevent opioid abuse by their patients. Dr. Summerhays urged dentists to be more judicious in their opioid prescribing when less aggressive treatments are indicated and to also make sure patients leave their offices knowing about their abuse potential and how to safely secure, monitor, and discard their unused medications at home.

Since that time, ADA has updated its own policy for managing dental pain, [Statement on the Use of Opioids in the Treatment of Dental Pain](#), especially for patients who are at risk for drug overdose and/or addiction. The policy includes statements that dentists should follow and continually review Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations for safe opioid prescribing and that dentists should consider nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory analgesics as the first-line therapy for acute pain management. This policy and additional resources for dentists and patients are promoted by the [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#).

As we recently told Congress, the CDC guideline is not particularly helpful to dentists because it does not address the nuances of using short-acting opioids to manage acute pain following a one-time oral surgery. In fact, the document expressly states:

"Some of the recommendations might be relevant for acute care settings or other specialists, such as emergency physicians or dentists, but use in these settings or by other specialists is not the focus of this guideline."

The ADA has been encouraging dentists to be more judicious in their opioid prescribing well before the CDC guideline was published. Since at least 2012, the ADA has produced free online continuing education, published an easy-to-use reference manual, and has been working with outside stakeholders to raise professional and consumer awareness about how opioid pain medications can be addictive. All of these efforts are ongoing.

We are also educating our members about the partial fill prescribing authority granted to dentists in the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act, subject to state law.²

Our component organizations, the Illinois State Dental Society and the Chicago Dental Society, have engaged in a number of local activities. See the attachment for details on their recent actions.

We invite you to an in-person meeting at our Chicago headquarters to identify evidence-based and common-sense strategies that we can implement locally to end this crisis. In the meantime, the ADA will continue raising professional awareness about prescription opioid abuse and offering resources to promote more judicious prescribing of prescription pain relievers. Rest assured, we will do everything in our power to address this problem.

If you have any questions, please contact Chad Olson at (312) 440-3520 or olsonc@ada.org. Information is also available at ADA.org/opioids.

Sincerely,



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



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

JPCKTO:jw

cc: Greg A. Johnson, Executive Director, Illinois State Dental Society
Randall B. Grove, Executive Director, Chicago Dental Society

Attachments: Statement on the Use of Opioids in the Treatment of Dental Pain
ISDS and CDS Support in Addressing Opioid Crisis

¹ 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.

² 21 U.S.C. 289(f)