

# Cardinal Health Launches Opioid Action Program to Support Drug Abuse Prevention and Education in Appalachia

**Company to Collaborate with Key Partners across Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee and West Virginia**

DUBLIN, Ohio, Nov. 16, 2017 /PRNewswire/ -- Cardinal Health (NYSE: CAH) today launched its new *Opioid Action Program*, aimed at helping communities in four of the nation's hardest-hit states across Appalachia combat the opioid epidemic. The pilot program will deliver much needed front-line tools to help prevent opioid abuse and support first responders in Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee and West Virginia.

The *Opioid Action Program* has four elements, each cited by leading experts as critical to the fight to reduce opioid abuse and casualties. (Please visit [www.cardinalhealth.com/opioidactionprogram](http://www.cardinalhealth.com/opioidactionprogram) and/or read Additional Details section below).

Specifically, Cardinal Health will:

- Purchase approximately 80,000 doses of the overdose-reversing drug, Narcan® (naloxone HCl) Nasal Spray 4mg, for distribution free-of-charge for first responders and law enforcement officials in Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee and West Virginia.
- Significantly ramp up its existing support for successful drug 'take back' and education programs. This initiative continues the work done, for several years, through the Cardinal Health Foundation's partnership with The Ohio State University College of Pharmacy, including take back events to occur in collaboration with local business and law enforcement in 13 communities across Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee and West Virginia where Cardinal Health has employees.
- Invest \$3 million to expand grants focused on youth prevention education, prescriber opioid awareness and reduction efforts and community responses to the epidemic in the four Appalachian states.
- Partner with the Warren Alpert Medical School at Brown University to share medical school curricula that addresses opioid misuse and treatment through a collaboration with medical schools located in Appalachia and throughout the country.

Cardinal Health will evaluate the success and impact of this pilot program and seek opportunities to expand it into additional states and communities. The company will actively look to partner with others willing to support programs that prevent drug addiction. The four pilot states were selected based on a combination of factors, including need around this devastating issue, proximity to Cardinal Health's headquarters in Ohio and the company's existing operational presence that will provide opportunities for engagement from Cardinal Health employees.

George Barrett, chairman and CEO of Cardinal Health, said, "Opioid addiction and abuse has harmed too many people in our home state of Ohio, across Appalachia and around the country. The men and woman of Cardinal Health are committed to being a part of the solution and we believe our *Opioid Action Program* will have a meaningful and positive impact. This program is intended to build on the important work we have done over the years to bring more resources to communities that need them, with a focus on known solutions that will help families and communities combat this epidemic. We look forward to partnering with other companies and organizations to leverage our commitment to help solve this complex public health crisis."

The *Opioid Action Program* builds on Cardinal Health's decade-long efforts to combat abuse and addiction and is designed to provide scalable solutions that the company can share with other companies and organizations. Nearly a decade ago, the Cardinal Health Foundation partnered with The Ohio State University College of Pharmacy to create the *Generation Rx* educational program to raise awareness and knowledge about the dangers of prescription drug misuse. Since that time, the Cardinal Health Foundation has invested millions of dollars and reached over one million people through partnerships and grants with non-profits across the country. The *Opioid Action Program* represents an important next step in combatting this tragic epidemic.

Dr. Ken Hale, Clinical Professor, Pharmacy Practice and Science, The Ohio State University College of Pharmacy, said: "We have worked with the Cardinal Health Foundation to develop and expand *Generation Rx* and its educational materials and programming for nearly ten years. I am proud of the work we have done together to reach and educate people of all ages about the hazards of prescription drug misuse. The *Opioid Action Program* is a major expansion of the existing *Generation Rx* program and will enable our educational materials to reach even more people in communities that are fighting the opioid epidemic."

Dr. Nick Hagemeyer, Associate Professor at the Gatton College of Pharmacy, East Tennessee State University, and Research Director of ETSU's Center for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment, said: "Combining multiple evidence-based approaches, and using them simultaneously, can help turn the tide of the opioid epidemic. Cardinal Health's *Opioid Action Program* does just that - by expanding their work in prevention education and provider education, donating life-saving Narcan® and increasing support for community drug take-back events."

Dr. Jeff Gray, Associate Professor at the Gatton College of Pharmacy, East Tennessee State University, Adjunct Professor, Department of Community & Behavioral Health, College of Public Health and co-principal investigator on a multi-year National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) grant focused on medication storage and disposal, said: "We're proud of the work we've done with the Cardinal Health Foundation in helping develop the *Generation Rx* drug disposal grant program. Cardinal Health's *Opioid Action Program* will build upon that effort, providing increased support for drug take back events that help remove unwanted or expired medications from the home while also giving communities the opportunity to educate consumers about the importance of proper disposal."

## Appendix

### **Additional Details about Cardinal Health's *Opioid Action Program***

Cardinal Health's *Opioid Action Program* brings new resources to Appalachian communities to help fight the opioid epidemic, building on the education and prevention work that Cardinal Health has done since 2009.

The program leverages Cardinal Health's position in a complex and highly regulated supply chain, in which the company, as a pharmaceutical wholesale distributor, is responsible for safely and securely delivering medications and medical supplies of all kinds, from the manufacturers that make them to the thousands of government-authorized pharmacies that fill doctors' prescriptions for patients. The program expands Cardinal Health's longstanding education initiatives and reflects what a wide range of subject matter experts, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) and the President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis, have called the most needed and most effective solutions to this problem.

This initiative is rooted in Cardinal Health's goal of preventing the diversion of controlled substances to illegitimate use and investing in programs that provide communities with necessary tools to fight this epidemic. Cardinal Health operates a state-of-the-art system that uses advanced analytics, technology and on-the-ground deployment of investigators to evaluate all pharmacies, scrutinize all pharmaceutical shipments and identify, block and report to regulators suspicious orders of pain medications that do not meet strict criteria. Nearly a decade of investment in the *Generation Rx* initiative through the Cardinal Health Foundation has brought prescription drug abuse prevention education and drug take back events to more than a million people nationwide, from school children to senior citizens.

The *Opioid Action Program* will deliver needed tools and resources to communities, students, prescribers, law enforcement and first responders on the front lines battling this epidemic. The program focuses on four key areas:

#### **1. Distribution of Narcan® Free-of-Charge for First Responders and Law Enforcement**

To help save lives in some of the nation's hardest-hit communities and provide resources to first responders, Cardinal Health has purchased nearly 80,000 doses of Narcan®, which the NASEM identified as a life-saving medication that reverses opioid overdoses, for distribution free-of-charge for first responders and law enforcement. The company will provide Narcan® to the Kentucky State Police and the Great Rivers Harm Reduction Coalition in West Virginia through a distribution program with the University of Charleston School of Pharmacy.

As part of this program, Cardinal Health is inviting interested and qualified entities in any of the four states who provide Narcan® for first responders to apply to receive Narcan® free-of-charge through this [online portal](#).

Adapt Pharma, the manufacturer of Narcan®, the only FDA-approved nasal naloxone that does not require assembly or any specialized medical training to use, is supporting Cardinal Health's effort as part of its overall push to help save the lives of those battling addiction. The NASEM and the President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis both urge expanding access to life-saving medications.<sup>1</sup> According to the CDC, fatal opioid overdoses have quadrupled since 1999<sup>2</sup>, and the *Opioid Action Program* will support the important work of first responders to reduce overdose deaths.

#### **2. Student and Prescriber Education and Community Support**

Experts from the CDC, NASEM and the President's Commission on the Opioid Crisis, among others, all point to overprescribing as a key driver of the opioid epidemic and to increased prescriber and public education as a critical tool to fight it.<sup>3</sup>

The Cardinal Health Foundation, supporting the findings of those independent experts, is committed to building on its prevention education and opioid misuse curriculum. Through the existing *Generation Rx* prescription drug misuse prevention education programming, Cardinal Health is significantly expanding its work with a variety of new grant programs. *Generation Rx* is a partnership of the Cardinal Health Foundation and The Ohio State University College of Pharmacy that focuses on prevention education, prescriber education and community collaborations. *Generation Rx* offers free, **downloadable resources** anyone can use to teach others about the dangers of prescription drug misuse. Every day, more than 1,600 young adults and about 3,100 adults aged 26 or older misuse a pain medication for the first time<sup>4</sup>, and more than a quarter of teenagers mistakenly believe that misusing and abusing prescription drugs is safer than using street drugs.<sup>5</sup>

The Cardinal Health Foundation is adding \$25,000 to \$35,000 **grants** for 30 to 50 non-profit organizations in the four pilot states to expand prevention education in K-12 schools and universities. These grants are designed to reach thousands of students in schools, after-school programming and through various youth organizations.

To further support prevention education, the Cardinal Health Foundation and The Ohio State University College of Pharmacy are working with Kroger to train more than 250 pharmacists this year who will educate students in classrooms throughout Ohio, using *Generation Rx* open source materials. Colleen Lindholz, President of Kroger's Pharmacies & The Little Clinics (TLC), reports that in the past few months Kroger has educated more than 800 students and teachers, which supports the pharmacy's and TLC's mission of "connecting with customers on an emotional and personal level."

The Cardinal Health Foundation will also be making 20 to 30 *Generation Rx* **grants** of \$25,000 to \$50,000 each to healthcare institutions throughout the four pilot states. These grants will support training for prescribers working at those institutions to transform the way they help patients understand and manage their pain, with fewer opioids prescribed.

The Cardinal Health Foundation encourages all potential grantees to use the CDC's Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain in developing their applications.

As Ohio is home to Cardinal Health's headquarters as well as nearly 7,000 of the company's employees, a third grant opportunity will be available targeting hard-hit communities in Ohio. This grant opportunity is informed by the National League of Cities/National Association of Counties report *A Prescription for Action - Local Leadership in Ending the Opioid Crisis*<sup>6</sup>, the Drug Enforcement Agency's *DEA 360 Strategy*<sup>7</sup> and the Surgeon General's report, *Facing Addiction in America*.<sup>8</sup> The grants will fund community collaboratives that are working to reduce opioid addiction, overdoses and opioid-related deaths. Such collaboratives include leaders (or their representatives) from multiple sectors in the community, including healthcare, law enforcement, education, local business, service providers, government, funding organizations and/or volunteer organizations. Funded collaboratives will work on two or more specific tactics to address the opioid crisis, such as prevention education, prescriber education, implementing or expanding drug take back events, increasing access to treatment, implementing or expanding drug courts, improving outcomes for babies born addicted to opioids and/or influencing policy. The Cardinal Health Foundation expects to fund five Ohio communities with grants of \$75,000 to \$100,000 each.

Visit [www.CardinalHealth.com/GenerationRX](http://www.CardinalHealth.com/GenerationRX) to learn more about Cardinal Health Foundation's *Generation Rx* programs and to apply for the Foundation's grant programs.

### **3. Supporting Drug Take Back Events**

Cardinal Health will invest more resources to shine a brighter light on and emphasize the importance of drug take back events. The company will sponsor take back events in 2018 in 13 communities across the four pilot states where Cardinal Health has associates and locations. Take back events are designed to provide a safe, convenient, and anonymous way to dispose of unused or expired medications. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, nearly 54% of those who misused prescription painkillers obtained them from a friend or relative.<sup>9</sup> The Geisinger Center for Health Research also found that only about 11% of unused medication is disposed of properly.<sup>10</sup> The NASEM recommendations include the need for improved consumer access to convenient and year-round drug take back events, to reduce the amount of unused medications available for misuse.<sup>11</sup>

Supporting drug take back events is a priority of *Generation Rx*. These new take back events follow Cardinal Health's partnership with Kroger in Ohio where the company has sponsored take back days in communities throughout the state in support of National Prescription Drug Take Back Day.

### **4. Medical School Training**

Cardinal Health is launching a new partnership with the Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University to engage other medical schools to help generate and disseminate curricula and best practices that focus on

responsible prescribing of opioids to train the next generation of physicians. One goal of the program is to expand the number of physicians who receive Drug Abuse Treatment Act (DATA) waivers enabling them to prescribe treatments for opioid use disorder.<sup>12</sup> Engaging with the medical education community about the risks associated with opioid overprescribing and sharing the CDC's new *Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain*<sup>13</sup> has been recommended by experts to help reduce overprescribing in medical practice. The **curricula** currently in use at the Warren Alpert School will help more than 30 fourth-year medical students gain the training required to prescribe medication-assisted therapy for opioid use disorder under a first-in-the-nation program implemented in partnership with the state of Rhode Island.

### **About Cardinal Health**

Cardinal Health, Inc. is a global, integrated healthcare services and products company, providing customized solutions for hospitals, healthcare systems, pharmacies, ambulatory surgery centers, clinical laboratories and physician offices worldwide. The company provides clinically proven medical products and pharmaceuticals and cost-effective solutions that enhance supply chain efficiency from hospital to home. Cardinal Health connects patients, providers, payers, pharmacists and manufacturers for integrated care coordination and better patient management. Because Cardinal Health helps ensure pharmacists and the consumers they serve have access to medications they need while working to help prevent prescription drug diversion, the company and its education partners created **Generation Rx**, a national program to help prevent the misuse of prescription medications. Cardinal Health is backed by nearly 100 years of experience, with approximately 50,000 employees in nearly 60 countries. For more information, visit [cardinalhealth.com](http://cardinalhealth.com), follow [@CardinalHealth](https://twitter.com/CardinalHealth) on **Twitter** and connect on LinkedIn at [linkedin.com/ company/cardinal-health](https://linkedin.com/company/cardinal-health).

### **About the Cardinal Health Foundation**

The Cardinal Health Foundation supports local, national and international programs that improve health care efficiency, effectiveness and excellence and the overall wellness of the communities where Cardinal Health, Inc.'s (NYSE:CAH) more than 40,000 employees live and work. The Cardinal Health Foundation also offers grants to encourage community service among its employees and works through international agencies to donate much-needed medical supplies and funding to those who need them in times of disaster; because Cardinal Health, Inc. is #AllInForGood. To learn more, visit [www.CardinalHealth.com/community](http://www.CardinalHealth.com/community) and visit the Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/CardinalHealthFoundation](http://www.facebook.com/CardinalHealthFoundation).

<sup>1</sup> The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, Pain Management and the Opioid Epidemic: Balancing Societal and Individual Benefits and Risks of Prescription Opioid Use. Available online at: <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/24781/pain-management-and-the-opioid-epidemic-balancing-societal-and-individual>.

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<sup>2</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available online at: <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/epidemic/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available online at: <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/prevention/prescribing.html>.

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<sup>4</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Available online: <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-FFR2-2015/NSDUH-FFR2-2015.htm>

<sup>5</sup> Survey Results from The Partnership for Drug Free Kids and the MetLife Foundation. Available online at: <https://drugfree.org/newsroom/news-item/national-study-teen-misuse-and-abuse-of-prescription-drugs-up-33-percent-since-2008-stimulants-contributing-to-sustained-rx-epidemic/>

<sup>6</sup> National League of Cities and National Association of Counties, A Prescription for Action. Available online at: <http://opioidaction.org/report/>.

<sup>7</sup> Drug Enforcement Agency, *DEA 360 Strategy*. Available online at <https://www.dea.gov/prevention/360-strategy/360-strategy.shtml>.

<sup>8</sup> United States Surgeon General, Facing Addiction in America Report. Available online at <https://addiction.surgeongeneral.gov/>.

<sup>9</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Available online at: <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-FFR2-2015/NSDUH-FFR2-2015.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Geisinger Center for Health Research. Available online at: <https://www.geisinger.org/about-geisinger/news-and-media/news-releases/2017/03/24/18/30/study-highlights-most-common-medications-left-unused-by-patients>

<sup>11</sup> National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, Pain Management and the Opioid Epidemic: Balancing Societal and Individual Benefits and Risks of Prescription Opioid Use. Available online at: [https://www.nap.edu/resource/24781/Highlights\\_071317\\_Opioids.pdf](https://www.nap.edu/resource/24781/Highlights_071317_Opioids.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Elinore McCance-Katz, MD, PhD, Paul George, MD, MHPE, Nicole Alexander Scott, MD, MPH, Richard Dollase, EdD, Allan R. Tunkel, PhD, James McDonald, MD, MPH. Brief Report: Access to Treatment for Opioid Use Disorders: Medical Student Preparation. *The American Journal on Addictions*, 26: 316-318. 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain. Available online at <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/prescribing/guideline.html>.

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<http://cardinalhealth.mediaroom.com/2017-11-16-Cardinal-Health-Launches-Opioid-Action-Program-to-Support-Drug-Abuse-Prevention-and-Education-in-Appalachia>