

Eastern Oklahoma Oral & Maxillofacial Surgeons

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Tulsa County Dental Colleagues,

The State of Oklahoma and Tulsa County are at a critical juncture. Our families, friends, and neighbors are struggling with an opioid epidemic. Everyday lives are being lost and the statistics are shocking. Each day more than 90 Americans die from prescription painkillers. Almost 4,000 Oklahoma citizens died between 2007-2012 and in 2015, 47,406,312 doses were written, enough prescriptions to give every man, woman and child in Tulsa County 74 pills.

As dental professionals we have a unique opportunity to combat this staggering problem. We are often the first prescriber of prescription opiates to teenage and adolescent patients. This initial inoculation is a critical moment in that patient's life. We are also some of the most frequent prescribers of prescription narcotics, and we frequently combine narcotics and benzodiazepines, further increasing the risks.

As health care providers, we must do everything in our power to face this issue. We must work with our physician colleagues when prescribing to our mutual patients. We must use the Prescription Monitoring Program; it has been proven to make a difference. We must prescribe the lowest appropriate dose and think critically every time we prescribe - check the Oklahoma and CDC Opioid Prescribing Guideline. For more detail on these guidelines, please go to [bit.ly/OpioidRxGuidelinesOK](http://bit.ly/OpioidRxGuidelinesOK) and [bit.ly/OpioidRxGuidelinesCDC](http://bit.ly/OpioidRxGuidelinesCDC). We must use alternative analgesics and multimodal pain control. We must screen for at risk patients. We must do our part. This devastating epidemic will not end unless we take charge as dentists, health care providers, and leaders for change in our communities.

As an oral and maxillofacial surgeon, I face these issues every day. We all do. This is a Call To Action. Please join me in combating this epidemic along with the Coalition Against Prescription and Substance Abuse of Tulsa (CAPSAT), the Tulsa Health Department, and the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs (OBND).

Please join me in addressing this epidemic.

Sincerely,

Heath H. Evans, DDS

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