



November 22, 2017

The Honorable Donald Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

The American College of Physicians respectfully submits the following comments regarding the Final Report of the President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis. The American College of Physicians is the largest medical specialty organization and the second-largest physician group in the United States. ACP members include 152,000 internal medicine physicians (internists), related subspecialists, and medical students. Internal medicine physicians are specialists who apply scientific knowledge and clinical expertise to the diagnosis, treatment, and compassionate care of adults across the spectrum from health to complex illness.

The College appreciates your and the commission's efforts to address the epidemic of opioid use disorder and stands ready to offer assistance. ACP has put together a collection of resources under the featured topic of the opioid epidemic as part of our [Online Learning Center](#), aimed at helping physicians to better treat patients with this issue. The resources cover opioid therapy, pain management, and behavioral health.

The College maintains that substance use disorders are treatable chronic medical conditions and should be treated as such. We are especially encouraged that the Commission's report emphasizes the need to expand access to substance use disorder treatment, for which there is a massive demand in many parts of the country. The Commission's report aligns in many areas with the recommendations made in ACP's policy paper, "[Health and Public Policy to Facilitate Effective Prevention and Treatment of Substance Use Disorders Involving Illicit and Prescription Drugs](#)," published earlier this year in *Annals of Internal Medicine*, including:

- Taking action to end the stigma surrounding substance use disorders.
- Supporting the integration of behavioral health care into primary care.
- Strongly supporting parity of mental health and substance use disorders and the coverage of comprehensive evidence-based treatment of substance use disorders.
- Supporting broad, unrestricted access to effective nonpharmacologic pain management services.

- Recommending that public and private health insurance payers, policymakers, and primary care and behavioral health care professionals work toward removing payment barriers that impede behavioral health and primary care integration.
- Lifting barriers that impede access to medications to treat opioid use disorder (methadone, buprenorphine, and naltrexone) and to medications for overdose prevention (naloxone).
- Directing states to make prescription drug monitoring programs easier to use and interoperable with electronic health records.
- Supporting alternatives to incarceration, including drug courts, for those with substance use disorders particularly if they serve as a gateway to receiving medication-assisted treatment.

ACP has prepared a more [detailed comparison](#) between the Commission's recommendations and ACP policies that illustrate the many areas where we are in agreement as well as some additional suggestions to guide policy.

The opioid epidemic has already taken tens of thousands of lives. Immediate action and resources are needed to help those suffering from the disease of addiction access treatment. We strongly urge you work with Congress and your Administration to secure the necessary funding to implement policies that will end this crisis that has impacted so many communities across the United States.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jack Ende", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jack Ende, MD, MACP
President

cc: The Honorable Chris Christie, Chair, President's Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis