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Shatterproof, RIZE Massachusetts, and GE Foundation Release Survey on Massachusetts Healthcare Professionals and Stigma around Screening, Treating Patients with Opioid Use Disorder
Research Finds that Stigma Around Addiction Extends to Provider Community

BOSTON, July 16, 2019 –Today, [GE Foundation](#), the philanthropic organization of GE; [RIZE Massachusetts \(RIZE\)](#), an independent nonprofit foundation working to end the opioid epidemic in Massachusetts; and [Shatterproof](#), a national nonprofit organization dedicated to reversing the course of the addiction crisis facing America, released the results of a year-long Massachusetts-wide project, “Opportunities to Increase Screening and Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder among Healthcare Professionals.” The goal of the white paper was to understand and identify opportunities to overcome stigmas that prevent certain healthcare providers from screening and treating patients with opioid use disorder (OUD) and close the treatment gap. The research found that stigma associated with OUD extends to the provider community, where a minority of providers are trained in addiction, find treating OUD satisfying, or want to work with OUD patients.

Financial support for this initiative came from GE Foundation and RIZE. The project consisted of both qualitative research and a quantitative survey. The Massachusetts Medical Society fielded the survey to their own members and led the coordinated effort with an additional 10 provider organizations to field the survey to their member base.

Shatterproof conducted the survey with healthcare professionals across the state of Massachusetts, focusing on three main areas: perceptions around OUD and managing patients with OUD, barriers to screening and treating patients with OUD, and interest in a wide range of potential programs to provide information or education to combat stigma and/or drive increased screening and treatment for OUD.

“This study shows just how powerful the stigma associated with addiction is,” said Julie Burns, the President and CEO of RIZE Massachusetts. “It also provides essential information that will help us close gaps in coverage. We are enormously grateful to the provider community for their candid participation in this project.” In fact, a consortium of eleven Boston and Cambridge hospitals have already stepped forward with a commitment to educate thousands of caregivers to better care for patients with addiction and support thousands of staff who may be affected by substance use disorder (SUD) either themselves or in their families over the next year.

Following review of existing research and stigma reduction initiatives, as well as focus groups with patients, family members, and healthcare providers, and a thought leader roundtable discussion, Shatterproof developed the 15-minute quantitative online survey. The survey was targeted towards the primary project specialties – Emergency Medicine (EM), Family Medicine (FM)/Internal Medicine (IM), and OBGYN/Women’s Health – as well as addiction specialists, pediatric providers, psychiatry providers, and social workers, as a point of comparison.

Key survey findings among respondents include:

- Only 1 in 4 providers had received training on addiction during medical education
- Only 1 in 10 EM providers found caring for patients with OUD satisfying
- Less than 50% of EM and FM/IM providers believed that OUD is treatable
- Almost one third of providers with more than 20 years of tenure tended to have a stronger preference for not working with patients with OUD.
- Almost half of providers felt patients would not be honest about their opioid use if asked directly
- Less than 1/3 of EM, OBGYN/Women’s Health, or pediatric providers feel very prepared to screen, diagnose, provide brief intervention for, or discuss or provide treatment for OUD
- 2x as many EM providers than any other specialty believe methadone treatment for OUD is substituting one addiction for another
- 2 in 5 EM or FM/IM providers feel that treating patients with OUD takes away time and resources from other patients
- More than 50% of Emergency Medicine, FM/IM, OBGYN/Women’s Health providers feel they don’t have sufficient access to behavioral health support to start patients on medication for addiction treatment.

These findings are consistent with those of the project’s qualitative work.

“We were honored to partner with GE Foundation, RIZE Massachusetts, and Massachusetts Medical Society to complete this important research that has provided much needed insight to the areas and opportunities of improvement for the education and preparedness of health care professionals,” said Gary Mendell, Founder & CEO, Shatterproof. “These findings will help continue to inform our work as we continue to create solutions that will reverse the course of the addiction crisis in America.”

The survey insights and learning were used to identify concrete opportunities for stigma-reduction programs and behavior change interventions across and within medical specialties, in order to increase screening and treatment of OUD.

As part of GE Foundation’s commitment to community health and to fighting the opioid crisis in Boston and across Massachusetts, this collaboration will ultimately result in a series of improved educational initiatives and programs to help more health care professionals screen and treat patients with OUD,” said David Barash, Executive Director, GE Foundation.

For detailed survey results please visit, www.shatterproof.org/InItTogether.

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About GE Foundation

GE Foundation, the philanthropic organization of GE, is committed to transforming our communities and shaping the diverse workforce of tomorrow by leveraging the power of GE. GE Foundation is developing skills by bringing innovative learning in community health globally and STEM education, scaling what works, and building sustainable solutions. GE Foundation is inspiring others to act by connecting GE people with communities through matching gifts and United Way, leading on emerging issues such as the opiate crisis, and convening community leaders to maximize our impact. Learn more at www.gefoundation.com or follow us on Twitter at [@GE_Foundation](https://twitter.com/GE_Foundation).

About RIZE Massachusetts

RIZE Massachusetts is an independent nonprofit foundation working to end the opioid epidemic in Massachusetts and reduce its devastating impact on people, communities, and our economy.

By tapping the commitment and resources of the private sector, we make informed investments in innovative and comprehensive evidence-based treatments that can be scaled, expedited, and made accessible to people suffering from opioid use disorder across the Commonwealth.

About Shatterproof

Shatterproof is a national nonprofit organization dedicated to ending the devastation addiction causes families. Shatterproof is focused on ending the stigma of addiction and ensuring treatment in America is based upon proven research. The organization advocates for changes to federal and state policy, payer reform, provider ratings, and provides public education through family and workplace programs.