In The Works

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Five of the nation's most influential health groups—including the American Medical Association (AMA) and the American Pharmaceutical Association—are urging state leaders to coordinate efforts to make sterile syringes available to injection-drug users (IDUs). "Any action that will help reduce diseases like AIDS is clearly an action that physicians should support," said AMA president Thomas Reardon, MD. In an October public letter, the coalition made a bureau-speak endorsement of access to clean needles through pharmacies. However, the cadre—which represents a total of about 350,000 professionals—didn't universally recommend often-illegal street syringe swaps. "One third of all AIDS cases and one half of hepatitis C cases are… linked to injection-drug use," the letter reads. "Limited access to sterile syringes contributes to transmission… among IDUs, their sex partners and their children. Removal or modification of legal barriers is an important step to increasing the availability of sterile syringes through pharmacies."

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