America Addresses Its Opioid Addiction

May 16, 2016 By Trent Straube

The United States has a drug problem. Rising abuse of heroin and prescription opioids—painkillers such as OxyContin, Vicodin and Percocet—has led not only to the highest rate of drug overdoses in our nation's history but also to outbreaks of HIV and hepatitis C, like those we saw in Indiana. We need more than a "Just Say No" campaign. President Obama and lawmakers are tackling the issue with these solutions:

- Congress lifted the federal ban on funding needle exchange programs, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued guidelines so that syringe service programs can receive funds.
- $94 million from the HHS will go to addiction treatment programs.
- Obama created the Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Parity Task Force to tackle the addiction epidemic.
- $11 million from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) will be used to expand treatment services and increase the number of doctors who can prescribe buprenorphine to treat opioid addiction.
- $11 million from SAMHSA is available for states to invest in the opioid overdose reversal drug naloxone.
- U.S. Senate passed a comprehensive drug addiction and treatment bill.
- $7 million will be invested in creating an Anti-Heroin Task Force Program.
- More than 60 medical schools will require their students to be educated on prescribing opioids

for pain.

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