

AACOM Statement on the Opioid Epidemic

AACOM recognizes that there is an urgent need to effectively address the opioid epidemic across the nation. Substance use disorders (SUD)—especially those related to opioids—are threatening the lives of Americans: from 1999 to 2016, [more than 630,000 people](#) have died from a drug overdose. Furthermore, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [40 percent](#) of all U.S. opioid overdose deaths involve a prescription opioid.

To meet the evolving health care needs of communities across the country, AACOM believes that it is critical to ensure that the future physician workforce is comprehensively trained. AACOM guides its member colleges of osteopathic medicine (COMs) by providing resources such as the [Osteopathic Core Competencies](#) that incorporate medical knowledge, interpersonal and communication skills, and systems-based practice and partnering with the Coalition on Physician Education in Substance Use Disorders (COPE) to help ensure that medical students receive the training and the skills they need to prevent, screen for, diagnose, and treat SUDs.

[Curricular innovations at our COMs](#) include simulation, focusing on women’s health and abuse, and community-based curricula integrated with care of underserved patients in rural and underserved communities hard-hit by this epidemic. In addition, the COMs are writing research proposals on reducing the non-medical use of prescription drugs and grants to train prescribers in opioid prescribing.

AACOM actively engages with the Administration, relevant federal agencies, Congress, and others to help address this serious epidemic. Our efforts include [working with the President’s Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis](#) on the critical role the nation’s osteopathic medical schools play in combating the crisis and the issue of substance abuse across the country. Additionally, an [overwhelming majority](#) of the COMs joined with other medical schools to answer a call for action by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and pledged to require all students to take a form of prescriber education in line with the [CDC’s Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain](#). As Congress considers a comprehensive solution to address this national emergency, AACOM continues to educate legislators and serves as a resource on behalf of the osteopathic medical education community. AACOM also strongly supports measures that address health professional workforce shortages and public health approaches to address non-addictive pain medicine alternatives.

About AACOM

The [American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine \(AACOM\)](#) leads and advocates for the full continuum of osteopathic medical education to improve the health of the public. Founded in 1898 to support and assist the nation's osteopathic medical schools, AACOM represents all 35 accredited colleges of osteopathic medicine—educating nearly 31,000 future physicians, 25 percent of all U.S. medical students—at 55 teaching locations in 32 U.S. states, as well as osteopathic graduate medical education professionals and trainees at U.S. medical centers, hospitals, clinics, and health systems.

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