

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 1, 2016

Eighty Urgent Care Clinics Adopt New Safe Opioid Prescribing Guidelines

LOS ANGELES – The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) and Safe Med LA, the countywide prescription drug abuse coalition, announced an initiative to implement safe-prescribing guidelines at 80 urgent care clinics from 10 major physician groups and health systems. This effort is focused on delivering a message of consistent, safe community practice among the medical community to provide effective pain management while reducing opioid overuse, abuse, diversion and doctor shopping for drugs.

Pain is one of the most common complaints among emergency room (ER) and urgent care patients. There can be great variability among clinicians in the management of pain. Morbidity and mortality increased as the frequency of opioid use increased in LA County, resulting in a 30% increase in opioid-related hospitalizations from 2006 – 2013, and a 170% increase in opioid-related ER visits over the same time period.

“Safe Med LA is taking a multifaceted approach to address the opioid epidemic by focusing on a variety contributing factors,” said LA County Interim Health Officer, Jeffrey Gunzenhauser, MD, MPH. “These include safe prescribing, access to medication-assisted addiction treatment, overdose prevention medication, safe drug disposal, and community education.”

Since 2015, all 76 ERs in LA County adopted the guidelines established by the American Academy of Emergency Medicine. These guidelines are now being expanded to include urgent care clinics, accompanied by patient communications that outline 10 measures to manage pain effectively and safely.

The use of the Urgent Care patient handout is aimed to provide accurate information about safe opioid prescribing and other pain relief options to prevent mistakes or abuse of pain medications that can cause serious health problems and death. Reinforcing this local effort is a statewide push to share patient prescribing information. On July 1, 2016, all physicians and pharmacists in California are required by law to be registered to use the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, or CURES, which is designed to help clinicians recognize patients who may be taking unsafe doses or quantities of opioid and other controlled medications.

Learn about Safe Med LA at www.safemedla.org. Provider groups/systems that operate the urgent care clinics in LA County include; AltaMed, Care 1st, Exer, Facey, Health Care Partners, Kaiser Permanente, LA County Department of Health Services, Providence, UCLA and US Healthworks.

The Department of Public Health is committed to protecting and improving the health of the nearly 10 million residents of Los Angeles County. Through a variety of programs, community partnerships and services, Public Health oversees environmental health, disease control, and community and family health. Public Health comprises nearly 4,000 employees and has an annual budget exceeding \$900 million. To learn more about the LA County Department of Public Health and the work they do, visit PublicHealth.LACounty.gov, and follow Public Health on social media at twitter.com/LAPublicHealth, facebook.com/LAPublicHealth, and youtube.com/LAPublicHealth.

###