



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DDAP Hosts Panel of Medical Providers, People in Recovery to Discuss Ways to Improve Addiction Treatment

Harrisburg, PA — Today, medical providers from across Pennsylvania came together with people in recovery from the disease of addiction to discuss ways the healthcare system can more effectively treat addiction.

“The insight and experience that each of the panelists brought to the discussion today was invaluable,” said Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) Secretary Gary Tennis. “As we continue to address the opioid overdose death epidemic, collaboration and cooperation among medical providers are vital. As was demonstrated in today’s conversation, an integrated approach that enables continued engagement throughout the healthcare system, including the addiction treatment system, is a smart approach.”

The panel discussion was held in recognition of National Recovery Month and as part of DDAP’s Building Bridges to Recovery initiative, which encourages dialogue between medical providers and the recovery community.

Panelists opened the discussion by conceding that addiction is a challenging disease to treat and offering insight into how to most effectively get people who need treatment into treatment, keep them engaged in the continuum of care and give them the best chance of staying on a path to recovery. Other topics discussed included effective use of medications to assist treatment, warm hand-off processes from emergency departments into treatment, and care coordination and integration.

“The opioid epidemic is the largest public health crisis that we face in Pennsylvania,” said Pennsylvania Physician General Rachel Levine. “Under the leadership of Governor Wolf, it has been all-hands-on-deck to address the crisis. Treatment does work, recovery is possible. We must foster hope for our patients, our families and our communities.”

In addition to Tennis and Levine, John Gallagher, MD, Vice Chair, Pennsylvania Medical Society Board of Trustees and Chair, Pennsylvania Medical Society Opioid Advisory Task Force, provided opening remarks.

Panelists included:

- Dr. Thomas Kohl, Berkshire Family Medicine, Reading Health System
- Brandon Antinopoulos, PharmD, pharmacy manager, Hometown Apothecary Drugs
- Dr. Roderick Groomes, director, Armstrong County Memorial Hospital Emergency Department

- Cindi Coffman, BA, CADC, CCS, assistant program director, Cove Forge Behavioral Health System
- Dr. Bill Santoro, chief, Section of Addictions Medicine, Reading Health System, medical director, New Directions
- Scott Scotilla, Psy.D. ICAADC, Scotilla Psychological Services LLC
- Andrew Schmitt, LCSW, Mazzitti and Sullivan Counseling Services
- Jen Zampogna, MD, Lawyers Concerned for Lawyers and a person in recovery
- Ovis Mangum, BA, CEAP, EAP case manager, Norfolk Southern Corp. and a person in recovery
- David Highfill, CRS, Vivitrol coordinator, The RASE Project and a person in recovery

Under Governor Wolf's leadership, Pennsylvania's response is interagency and multifaceted, including prevention, treatment and recovery, and has focused largely on working with the medical community. Initiatives have included training current and future medical providers; working with medical school deans to improve student education; and publishing evidence-based specialty-specific opioid prescribing guidelines.

The administration also has partnered with Pennsylvania Medical Society and other specialty organizations to produce continuing-education modules for medical professionals. All of the modules are free on the PA Medical Society website until the end of 2016.

In addition, the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program has been implemented. This critical online tool supports clinicians in identifying patients who may be struggling with the disease of addiction and helps connect them with treatment services.

Pennsylvania has also made naloxone a top priority. More than 1,500 overdoses have been reversed since Act 139 was implemented in 2014. To more effectively direct those individuals who have overdosed into treatment, DDAP continues to work with its county-level drug and alcohol administrators on a warm hand-off process whereby overdose survivors are taken from the emergency department directly to treatment.

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