



Statement for the Record
House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health
February 28, 2018

CVS Health's mission is based on the simple premise that health is everything, and we believe our role is to help people on their path to better health. This belief guides every decision we make. Every day, in countless ways, our teams of expert clinicians, pharmacists, and nurses work hard to care for patients.

We share the House Energy and Commerce Committee's concern that across the country, many lives in the communities we serve are being disrupted by the opioid abuse epidemic. The problem is a complex one with many causes and challenges. Defeating the epidemic of opioid abuse requires the active involvement of stakeholders throughout the health care community, as well as law enforcement and regulatory agencies, and CVS Health is committed to being part of the solution.

While CVS Health has developed and implemented numerous programs and initiatives aimed at combating opioid abuse across our company, we understand the Committee is interested in obtaining additional recommendations regarding policy and regulatory changes that could be made to help align and leverage the full range of clinical assets offered across the health care payor and provider continuum.

As Congress considers new initiatives to address the epidemic, we strongly encourage consideration of the following:

Reducing Quantities of Opioids Prescribed

In 2016, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released a prescribing guideline to promote medically appropriate use of prescription painkillers. The recommendations in the guideline are intended to assist primary care providers make informed prescribing decisions and improve patient care for those with pain while reducing the number of people who misuse, abuse or overdose from these drugs.

CVS Health has created a program for our clients that incorporates the 2016 CDC recommendations into the utilization management programs for prescriptions adjudicated through CVS Caremark, our pharmacy benefits manager. We have encouraged our clients to adopt this program, and if they do, we limit the quantities of opioids covered to a seven-day supply for most acute conditions. Our initial findings indicate employers, unions, and health plans that implemented our opioid utilization management program in 2017 experienced a 70 percent decrease in the number of patients new to opioid therapy with an acute condition who received more than seven-day supply of an opioid. For those plans, the number of patients new to opioid therapy who now receive a seven-day supply or less is nearly 94 percent.

We believe, however, more can be done at the federal and state level to reduce the risks of inappropriate use and to limit unnecessary supply. The CDC guideline advises there is rarely a need for more than seven days of opioids for acute conditions. Based on this recommendation, at least 18 states have established prescribing limits for acute pain at seven days or less. CVS Health supports these quantity restrictions and believes Congress should take action to amend the Controlled Substances Act to establish similar prescribing limits at the federal level and to expand the circumstances under which a pharmacy could provide a partial fill of a CII opioid medication.

E-Prescribing of Controlled Substances

CVS Health supports electronic prescribing of prescription drugs. Electronic prescribing has proven effective in reducing drug diversion and fraud, as it makes it easier to track prescriptions and more difficult to alter them. We believe Congress should move to require electronic prescribing in Medicare as would be required under H.R. 3528, *The Every Prescription Conveyed Securely Act*, introduced by Congressman Markwayne Mullin (R-OK) and Congresswoman Katherine Clark (D-MA). Enactment of this legislation would be a significant step to improve patient outcomes, increase drug security, and limit the inappropriate use of opioids.

Support for Prescription Drug Take-Back Programs

For several years, CVS Health has supported the *Medication Disposal for Safer Communities Program*, which provides police departments across the United States with an easy way to obtain a drug collection unit for their locations. Through this program, created with the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids, CVS Health has donated more than 860 medication disposal units to local police departments in 43 states, collecting more than 140 metric tons of unwanted medication. Beginning in 2017, CVS Health expanded its total disposal units to 1,550 kiosks, including the phase-in of 750 additional disposal units in CVS Pharmacy locations across the country.

We believe these kinds of programs provide a valuable resource to public health and law enforcement organizations in securing unwanted medications. As Congress considers additional funding to address the opioid abuse epidemic, we encourage members to support financial assistance for community drug take-back programs, which have demonstrated a meaningful impact on reducing drug diversion and abuse across the United States. Additionally, we believe Congress could provide a review of current drug take-back and disposal regulations in an effort to limit costs and to ensure as many providers as possible are able to participate in these important community take-back initiatives.

CVS Health appreciates the opportunity to offer our recommendations to the Committee. We look forward to working with you further as you consider solutions to address this public health crisis.