



**New York City Department of
Health and Mental Hygiene**

Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH
Commissioner

Spring 2017

Dear Health Care Professional:

Opioid analgesic misuse and overdose is a deadly epidemic nationally and in New York City. In 2015, more than one opioid analgesic overdose death occurred every other day in NYC. **In Brooklyn, residents of Coney Island-Sheepshead Bay and Bensonhurst-Bay Ridge have the highest rates of opioid analgesic overdose death.** As part of *HealingNYC*, the City's effort to address the rising epidemic of deaths from opioid-involved overdoses, the NYC Health Department is working with communities and partners to prevent opioid misuse and save lives.

As a health care provider, you are on the front lines of this epidemic and can help prevent additional deaths. Most opioid analgesics that are misused or result in an overdose likely originate from a prescription written by a provider seeking to alleviate pain. Safe and judicious prescribing practices can protect your patients and reduce the potential for misuse by others. Small changes in your practice can make a powerful impact on the health of your patients and the Brooklyn community:

- Prescribe non-opioid pain relievers (e.g., acetaminophen, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) for most cases of acute pain. When prescribing opioid analgesics for severe acute pain, prescribe only short-acting agents. (A three-day supply is usually sufficient.)
- Avoid prescribing opioid analgesics to patients taking benzodiazepines to limit the risk of fatal respiratory depression.
- Calculate the total daily morphine milligram equivalents (MME) when prescribing opioid analgesics. Dosages of ≥ 100 MME should be a threshold for caution and thorough patient reassessment. (NYC DOHMH's OpioidCalc, a free smartphone app, can help you determine MME and overdose risk in seconds.)

This **Opioid Analgesics Action Kit** includes clinical tools and resources for your practice and educational materials for your patients. To access Action Kit materials online, including OpioidCalc, visit the NYC DOHMH homepage at nyc.gov/health, and search for **opioid prescribing**.

Thank you for your dedication to the health of Brooklyn residents, and for your partnership in reversing this epidemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary T. Bassett".

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