Palm Beach County Medical Society

Healthcare Emergency Response Coalition (HERC)

Opioid Task Force

Background:

On July 21, 2017 the leadership of the Palm Beach County Medical Society participated in a Roundtable Discussion on the Opioid Crisis at the VA Medical Center, West Palm Beach. The discussion of health care leaders was led by Congresswoman Lois Frankel.

The purpose of the meeting was a call to action to the healthcare community to identify strategies and best practices to reverse the opioid crisis as Governor Rick Scott had recently declared it a Public Health Emergency. The VA Medical Center shared their best practices and protocols that have resulted in a decline in opioid prescriptions and improved outcomes. The Health Care District shared their positive outcomes with the Suboxone Pilot Program at JFK Medical Center.

Consensus was reached that there is a need to educate and raise physician, hospital and healthcare provider awareness

* About prescription opioid-related morbidity and mortality, and what steps can be taken to promote the safe use of medications.
* The intersection of prescription opioid misuse with the resurgence in heroin use and addiction,
* How the clinical practice environment for pain management and opioid prescribing has been influenced by the public and private sector
* Alternative therapies for treatment
* Recommendations for promoting safe opioid use in different patient populations.

There’s also a critical need to discuss how to support comprehensive treatment for pain and substance abuse disorders and prevention strategies.

PBCMS through The Healthcare Emergency Response Coalition (HERC) program was asked to provide leadership on this issue.

Immediately, a taskforce comprised of community healthcare leaders was created (see attached) and by October 12th, it had coordinated, planned and hosted an Opioid Summit with over 70 healthcare providers in attendance. The Summit featured professors from the Medical School at Brown University who shared their best practices which were instrumental in curbing Rhode Island’s opioid epidemic. It also explored the science of addiction and a panel discussion provided the opportunity to learn of programs currently underway in Palm Beach County.

The taskforce has since met several times, and with the assistance of a hired consultant, created a healthcare driven Opioid Response Plan with an overarching goal: to reduce opioid deaths in Palm Beach County by a 3rd using a comprehensive approach that recognizes addiction as a medical illness and accomplished by an evidence based strategy that addresses the following:

* Prevention – through safer prescribing, supply reduction, demand reduction
* Rescue – use of Naloxone as a standard of care
* Treatment – “Every Door is the Right Door” philosophy
* Recovery - Recovery support expansion

Next steps will include presentations to community stakeholders to receive buy-in and to begin the implementation.