

# VETERINARIANS & THE OPIOID CRISIS

## Tackling Opioid Use Disorder



## SIZE OF THE PROBLEM

**Frequent opioid users have turned to the Veterinary field as the “path of least resistance” to fuel their battle with Opioid Use Disorder.**<sup>1</sup>

In 2018, over two-thirds of the 67,000 drug overdose deaths in the United States involved opioid usage.<sup>2</sup>

## ROLE OF PROFESSIONALS

### What to Look For

- Possible owner-inflicted injuries.
- Noting frequent and/or unexplained injuries.<sup>1</sup>
- Exaggeration of the severity of the pet’s chronic conditions.
- Switching frequently between different veterinary practices.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

### Steps to Take

- Reduce the number and frequency of opioid prescriptions, if at all possible.
- Document and report suspected abuse.<sup>1</sup>
- Maintain contact with other local veterinarians if prescription abuse is suspected.<sup>1</sup>
- Encourage communication between veterinarians and pharmacists.

## INTERVENTION

### Awareness is Key

- Studies have documented the effectiveness of early and adequate prescribing education for veterinarians and greater screening practices for pet owners.
  - For more information, please refer to the FDA official guidelines below.

## STAY INFORMED

### Further Education

For more information regarding prescribing education for veterinary professionals, please visit the Food and Drug Administration website at <https://www.fda.gov/animal-veterinary/resources-you/opioid-epidemic-what-veterinarians-need-know>

### Sponsor Information

This fact sheet was funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award (GA1RH33552) totaling \$1,000,000. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government.

### References Cited

1. Lanaux, T. Lejeune, A. Eide, M. Estrada, A. The Opioid Crisis: Responsibilities of the Veterinary Profession. University of Florida. 2018
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Prescription opioid data. 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/data/prescribing.htm>

