

# Navigating the Opioid Crisis in Tennessee - a Health Plan Perspective

Andrea Knight, PharmD  
Corporate Pharmacy Director  
BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee

# The Epidemic in Tennessee

---

- Tennessee ranks **3<sup>rd</sup>** in opioid prescribing nationally, creating a public health crisis in our state
- More Tennesseans died in **2016** of drug overdose than roadway fatalities
- More than **1,000** babies were born with Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome in Tennessee in 2016
- **55%** of those using prescription drugs recreationally got them from a friend or relative
- Tennessee shares borders with **8** states

# Our Commitment

---

- + To promote appropriate pain management and thereby reduce member addiction, overdoses, and deaths.
- + To establish policies and procedures to prevent overprescribing while ensuring those whose medical conditions warrant managed usage will have access to these medications.
- + To ensure our effort complements existing initiatives sharing the same goals.



# Our Strategy

---

- + Conducted an in-depth review of guidelines from various agencies
- + Evaluated industry-level limits and authorization requirements
- + Convened an external advisory panel for feedback and development of stepwise approach
- + Developed a communication plan for prescribers, patients, and the public
- + Executed changes in coverage requirements
- + Provided philanthropic support for awareness and community interventions

# Our Policies

---

## Formulary

- + Expanded and modified Quantity Limits based on Cumulative Morphine Equivalent Dose (MEqD)
- + Prior Authorization required for all patients receiving long-acting opioids
- + Continue to cover abuse deterrents as well as medication assisted treatments

## Results

- + Completed ~18K Prior Authorization and Quantity Limit requests
- + Average approval rating of ~55%
- + 6% reduction in opioid claims
- + 10% reduction in average MEqD
- + Received mixed feedback from prescribers and employers but overall positive

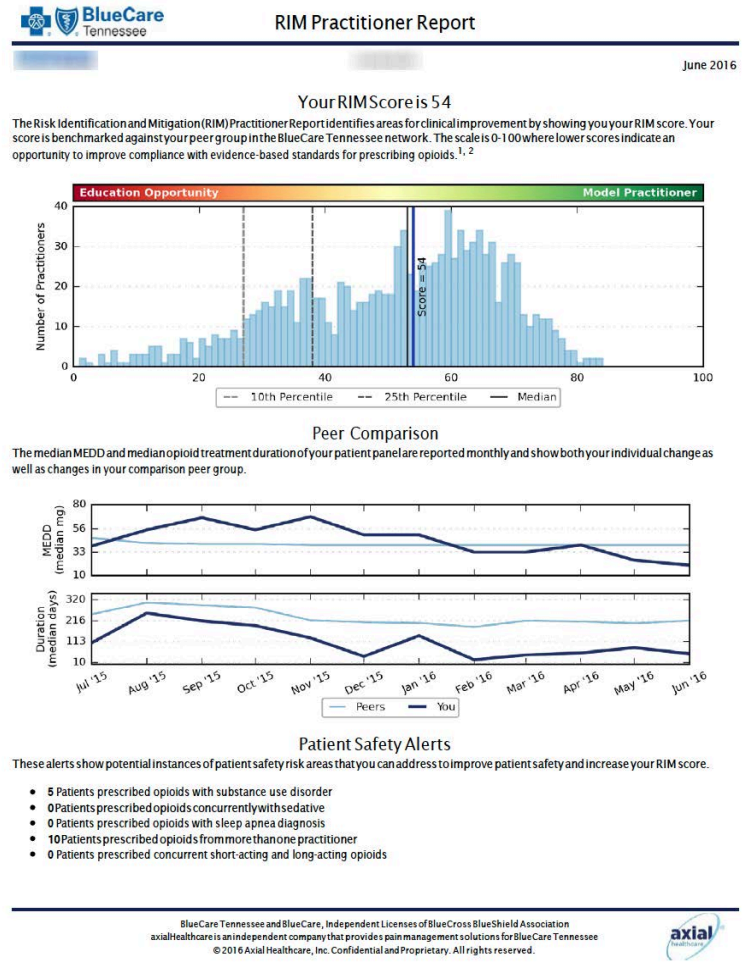
# Patient Support

- + Integrated medical and behavioral health approach to case management for at-risk members
- + Specialized approach for expectant mothers with opioid dependence
- + Collaborative program with state agencies for infants born with neonatal abstinence syndrome



# Prescriber Support

- + Established partnerships to promote best practices in prescribing
- + Scorecards that provide evaluation of a prescriber's opioid prescribing patterns compared to in-network peers
- + Guidance and consultation on treatment plans and clinical pathways
- + Notification of patients at high risk for potential abuse
- + Education and training for emerging prescribers





# Community Investments

- + \$2.6M BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Health Foundation investment supporting Count It! Lock It! Drop It! to promote safe medication storage and disposal
- + \$250,000 Foundation grant provides:
  - Naloxone training
  - supplies to law enforcement
- + More than \$2M Foundation Support for addiction treatment





# Next Steps

---

- + Reconvene external advisory panel
- + Optimize utilization management strategies
- + Proactive outreach directly to patients
- + Review non-medical offerings
- + Ongoing BlueCross Health Foundation support



# Thank You



BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee, an Independent Licensee of BlueCross BlueShield Association