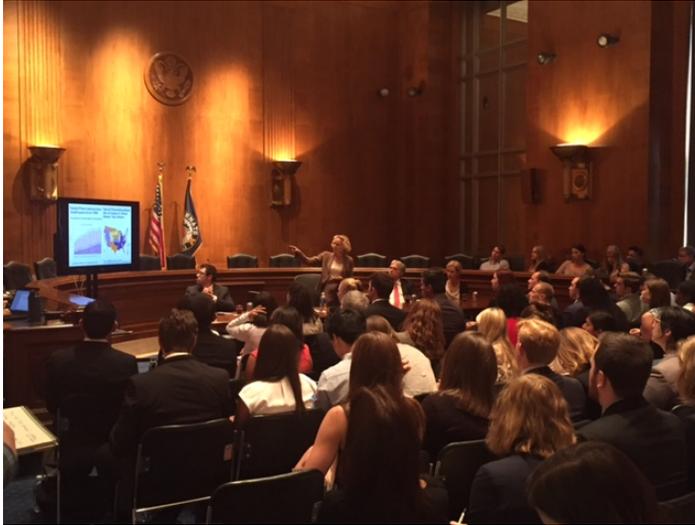




American College of Neuropsychopharmacology



To a standing room only, bipartisan crowd, the ACNP Liaison Committee, led by Committee Chair Natalie Rasgon, M.D., Ph.D., (Stanford University) and Co-Chair Charles B. Nemeroff, M.D., Ph.D., (University of Miami) presented “The Nation’s Opioid Addiction and Overdose Crisis,” on June 30th.

Working with the office of Senator Lamar Alexander (R-TN), Chair of the U.S. Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, the briefing was presented as opioid legislation recently passed in the House of Representatives and now heads to the

Senate. The goal of this program, and all ACNP briefings, is to educate policy makers on important scientific issues and stress the importance of continued research funding.

Dr. Nora Volkow, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and an ACNP member, presented to the group on how science informs us about the intertwined problems of chronic pain, nonmedical use of prescription pain medicines, heroin use, and opioid overdose deaths in the U.S. The misuse of, and addiction to, opioids such as heroin and prescription pain medicines is a serious national problem that affects public health as well as social and economic welfare. Neuroscience research has provided some solutions to aspects of the problem, but we also know that existing evidence-based prevention and treatment strategies are both highly underutilized and not efficacious for many patients. Accompanying Dr. Volkow was Mr. Justin Riley, President and CEO of Young People in Recovery who offered a patient’s perspective.

Significant efforts have been undertaken across the United States to reduce diversion and misuse of prescription opioids and to reduce opioid overdoses and related deaths. NIDA supports research to understand the impact of these policy changes on rates of opioid misuse, opioid use disorders, and related public health outcomes. This research has demonstrated the efficacy of multiple types of interventions including:

- Educational initiatives delivered in school and community settings (primary prevention)
- Supporting consistent use of prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMPs)
- Implementation of overdose education and naloxone distribution programs to issue naloxone directly to opioid users and potential bystanders
- Aggressive law enforcement efforts to address doctor shopping and pill mills

- Diverting justice-involved individuals with substance use disorders to Drug Courts with mandated engagement in treatment
- Expansion of access to Medication Assisted Treatments
- Abuse-deterrent formulations for opioid analgesics
- Unfortunately the increasing regulation of prescription opiates has had an unintended consequence, namely a marked increase in heroin use which has further contributed to the alarming overdose death rate due to opiates in the United States

The attendance and response to the briefing has been overwhelmingly positive. Many of the staffers were appreciative of the education and the efforts of our members' research in an area of such dire need. It is clear that understanding the pathogenesis of opiate addiction, like all other medical disorders, is the requisite cornerstone for developing novel prevention and treatment strategies.

