



NEWS RELEASE

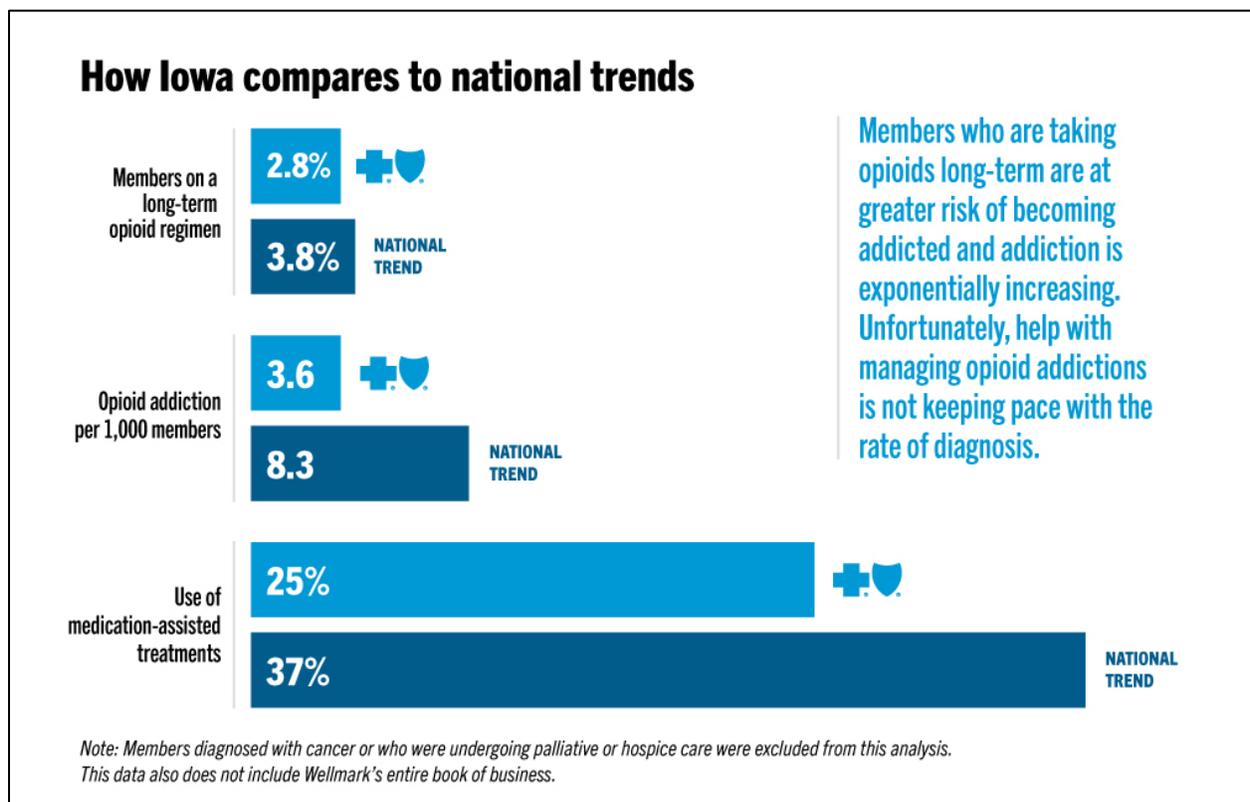
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Wellmark data reinforces gap in treatment for opioid addiction

DES MOINES, IA (July 19, 2017) — Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield announced today 17.3 percent of its Iowa members filled at least one opioid prescription in a year compared to 21.4 percent nationally, according to a new report by the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

“While these numbers are less than the national average, opioid addiction is still a prominent issue in the state,” said Matt Hosford, Wellmark Vice President and Chief Pharmacy Officer. “Wellmark is committed to working with Iowa stakeholders to address this crisis.”

In Iowa, Wellmark promotes following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for prescribing opioids for chronic pain. Wellmark is also supportive of public health efforts, such as drug take-back programs within the state and workgroups aimed to curb the inappropriate use of opioids.



Other key findings

Nationally, Blue Cross and Blue Shield (BCBS) members with an opioid addiction spiked 493 percent from 2010 through 2016. However, the use of medication-assisted treatments only increased 65 percent — which would suggest there is an ongoing struggle to keep pace with managing and treating opioid addiction.

The data also showed women fill more opioid prescriptions than men, putting them at higher risk for addiction. Specifically, women over the age of 45 are taking longer prescription durations increasing their chances of addiction. When it comes to people younger than 45, men have higher rates of opioid addiction than women.

The report “America’s Opioid Epidemic and Its Effect on the Nation’s Commercially Insured Population,” represents a comprehensive study of national medical claims from BCBS members using opioid painkillers, as well as those diagnosed with an opioid addiction over a seven-year period.

For more information, visit bcbs.com/healthofamerica.

About Wellmark

Wellmark, Inc. (wellmark.com) does business as Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Iowa. Wellmark and its subsidiaries and affiliated companies, including Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of South Dakota, Wellmark Health Plan of Iowa, Inc., Wellmark Synergy Health, Inc. and Wellmark Value Health Plan, Inc., insure or pay health benefit claims for more than 2 million members in Iowa and South Dakota. Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Iowa, Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of South Dakota, Wellmark Health Plan of Iowa, Inc., Wellmark Synergy Health, Inc. and Wellmark Value Health Plan, Inc. are independent licensees of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association.

About Blue Cross Blue Shield Association

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association is a national federation of 36 independent, community-based and locally-operated Blue Cross and Blue Shield companies that collectively provide healthcare coverage for one-in-three Americans. BCBSA provides health care insights through The Health of America Report series and the national BCBS Health IndexSM. For more information on BCBSA and its member companies, please visit bcbs.com. We also encourage you to connect with us on Facebook, check out our videos on YouTube, follow us on Twitter and check out The BCBS Blog.

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