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**Kentucky Hospitals Join Together to Fight Opioid Epidemic**

*KHA Launches Kentucky Statewide Opioid Stewardship (KY SOS) Program*

LOUISVILLE, KY – (April 30, 2019) The National Institute on Drug Abuse ranks Kentucky among the top 10 states with the highest opioid-related overdose deaths, and Kentucky’s hospitals are on the front line in the fight to help the state recover. To assist the state’s hospitals in this battle, the Kentucky Hospital Association (KHA) is partnering with the Cabinet for Health and Family Services as part of the Kentucky Opioid Response Effort (KORE) to launch the Kentucky Statewide Opioid Stewardship (KY SOS) program.

Opioid stewardship involves a coordinated effort to reduce opioid-related harm by developing alternative means to manage pain and, when opioids are used, assuring that opioid prescribing and patient monitoring aligns with evidence-based guidelines. KY SOS will focus on reducing opioid overprescribing and improving safe opioid use by providing hospitals and health systems with education and resources on how to attain the highest level of performance on opioid stewardship.

Phillip Chang, MD, MBA, FACS, chief medical officer at UK HealthCare, will chair an Advisory Committee to develop standards for the program. The committee is comprised of clinical experts in emergency medicine, addictions treatment, pharmacy and nursing, along with hospital administration and a former patient. These experts, along with KHA staff, will assist the state’s hospitals with implementation and will gather data to track their progress. Additionally, this initiative will provide a voluntary certification opportunity for Kentucky hospitals to demonstrate their actions and commitments to their patients and communities in combating the state’s opioid epidemic.

So far, 72 hospitals have made a commitment to the program and more facilities continue to join their ranks.

“This is the first statewide program of its kind where all hospitals in Kentucky collaborate together to combat the opioid crisis at its root – inappropriate or excess opioid prescribing,” stated Chang. “We will leverage data, analytics and the spirit of healthy competition amongst Kentucky hospitals to reduce and eliminate opioid addiction while still ensuring adequate pain control. This preventive work will complement the tremendous efforts through our state on recovery, rehabilitation and harm reduction.”

“We at the Cabinet for Health and Families Services are incredibly gratified that KHA and Kentucky hospitals are taking a leadership role in solving one of the most destructive public health care crises in our commonwealth,” noted Allen J. Brenzel, MD, MBA, Medical Director for the Kentucky Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities, which is overseeing the KORE program. “Promoting the appropriate prescribing of opioids is a critical prevention strategy that will decrease the number of individuals who are at risk of progressing to a life-threatening opioid use disorder. This initiative will most certainly save lives.”

KHA President Mike Rust stated, “Kentucky hospitals are committed to working toward improving opioid stewardship collectively, and ultimately reducing the risk of addiction for their patients. KHA is proud to support the hospitals as they continue to provide high quality health care and further demonstrate their dedication to the communities they serve.”

**About the Kentucky Hospital Association:** KHA was established in 1929. The Association represents hospitals, related health care organizations and integrated health care systems dedicated to sustaining and improving the health status of the citizens of Kentucky. The Association is headquartered in Louisville.

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