

VA Research Highlight

VA Research Leads to More Effective Pain Treatments, Reduced Opioid Harms



Multiple VA medical centers across the U.S.

Why this research is important:

Opioid overdose is a major public health problem, and a leading cause of death. Every year, over a million patients in VA receive more than one opioid prescription.

Summary:

VA researcher Elizabeth Oliva (Palo Alto VA) informed the rapid deployment of naloxone kits to reduce overdose deaths among Veterans.

VA researcher Erin Krebs (Minneapolis VA) found that non-opioid pain medicines are at least as effective as opioids for treating many types of chronic pain, and with fewer side effects.

Researchers also helped to implement the use of psychosocial and complementary and integrative treatments for pain, increasing access to non-opioid treatment, with more than 1,500 providers trained in acupuncture.

Most recently, VA researchers have helped launch medication-assisted treatment and stepped care for opioid use disorder in several regions across the U.S.: California/Arizona, Utah/Colorado, Iowa/Midwest, and New England.

How the research will improve Veterans' lives:

Veterans will have increased access to effective treatments for pain, without relying on opioids, thus reducing the risk of addiction and possible death.



Dr. Erin E. Krebs

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U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
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