

The Latest in the Fight to Control PA's Opioid Crisis

By Rep. Dan Moul (R-Adams)

The fight against opioid addiction and overdose, which has claimed the lives of thousands of Pennsylvanians, continues in the Pennsylvania House of Representatives where two more bills were recently voted out of the House Health Committee.

It may surprise you to learn that pain management clinics in Pennsylvania are not currently regulated or required to register with any state agency or entity. This lack of oversight would be rectified in legislation that I am co-sponsoring.

House Bill 1214 would add pain management clinics to the list of health care facilities licensed and regulated by the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) to ensure they are not prescribing or dispensing controlled substances inappropriately.

Clearly, the prescribing of opioid medications needs to be more carefully monitored to help ensure public health and safety. For many who have fallen victim to opioid addiction, their downhill journey began with treatment for pain stemming from an injury or medical procedure.

My legislation would require greater transparency in the prescribing of pain medication. When each pain medication clinic files its annual registration, as required under this bill, it must disclose information concerning the profession and licensure status of all individuals with an ownership interest in the clinic and whether they have an ownership interest in any other clinic. Only physicians with a valid and active license may have an ownership interest in a pain management clinic. Further, my bill would require clinics to provide the name and professional status of each clinic employee, as well as the name, professional license number and practice address of the clinic's medical director.

Under the bill, each pain management clinic must have a dedicated medical director to oversee the clinic's compliance with registration and operational requirements. He or she must hold an appropriate certification from a nationally recognized board and be present at the clinic at least half of the time patients are there.

Any prescriber must hold an appropriate license, registration or certification when writing prescriptions and no prescriber or physician may dispense a controlled substance at the pain management clinic.

While it is important to ensure people struggling with chronic pain can access the medications they need, it is equally important to prevent the diversion, misuse and abuse of controlled substances.

The second bill would help health care professionals to quickly identify patients who previously overdosed to more effectively treat overdose victims. **House Bill 1005** would require first responders and hospital personnel to document the use of Narcan, Naloxone or any other opioid overdose agent in the patient's record in a state database. Created in 2014, the database helps to track opioid prescriptions to prevent people with an addiction from obtaining multiple scripts from different doctors. The information would also signal health care providers and social workers to intervene and urge the victim to get into treatment for addiction.

Both bills are now on their way to the full House for consideration.