

Media Release

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RELEASE DATE: January 13, 2017

Painful Reality: Opioid Addiction in Maryland Workplaces on the Rise

Local Workers' Comp Company Creates Opioid Addiction Prevention Message Kit for Employers

(TOWSON, Md.) — Three out of every four injured workers are currently prescribed opioids after a workplace accident, according to the Workers' Compensation Research Institute (WCRI). Even more alarming, as many as 35 percent of injured workers with chronic pain are addicted to their pain medication, according to the Journal of Addictive Diseases. In Maryland, overdose deaths caused by prescription opioids continues to increase. From

January through June 2016, 210 prescription opioid deaths were recorded in Maryland, a 10 percent increase over the first six months of 2015, according to the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Thomas Phelan, president and CEO of Chesapeake Employers' Insurance Company, Maryland's largest writer of workers' comp insurance, believes it is important to tackle the issue of opioid drug abuse and addiction on all fronts, which includes helping employers promote the prevention message in their workplaces. That's why Chesapeake Employers created the "STOPIoid Drug Addiction Prevention Message Kit" for employers. The kit is free and includes:

- Prevention awareness posters
- Safety article, tip sheet and flyer
- Digital graphics



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“Many injured workers are prescribed opioid painkillers to help with the pain they suffer after a serious injury,” explains Phelan. “The problem occurs when injured workers get addicted to these drugs.”

He continues: “Opioid addiction prevents workers from returning to gainful employment and adversely affects families and finances, and potentially harms children who find and use opioid medications meant for someone else. Furthermore, opioid addiction can lead to heroin use.”

Stephen Fisher, M.D., Ph.D., Medical Advisor to Chesapeake Employers, explains that many of the opiates prescribed to injured workers for pain actually fall into the same class of compounds as heroin and morphine.

“There’s a misconception that pharmaceutical opioids are drastically different and less addictive than heroin,” says Dr. Fisher. “But the reality is that the two are chemically similar. The only difference is that one is illegal and the other is made legally in a lab, but they have similar effects on the brain.”

Opioids don’t always help with chronic pain, says Robin Iachini, M.S.N., R.N., Health Services Manager for Chesapeake Employers. “The narcotic medications are not always helping our injured workers get back to work,” Iachini says. “The pain medications that are meant to improve outcomes for injured workers are actually leading to increased disability and medical costs in many cases. There are other ways to treat pain, including the use of non-narcotic pain medication, and injured workers should discuss these alternatives with their treating providers.”

Chesapeake Employers Insurance wants Maryland employers to know that the opioid addiction prevention message kit is free and can be ordered by emailing the company at publications@ceiwc.com. The digital version of the kit is available online at www.ceiwc.com.

About Chesapeake Employers Insurance

Chesapeake Employers’ Insurance Company is Maryland’s largest writer of workers’ compensation insurance. It is a nonprofit, non-stock, private corporation. Chesapeake Employers has served as a continuous, guaranteed source for fairly priced workers’ compensation insurance since 1914.

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