

Bills Aimed At Stemming Overdose Deaths Become Law

STATE HOUSE – Two bills supported by the Senate Health and Human Services Committee to address the recent increase in drug overdose deaths in the region have been signed into law, and a third was passed by the Assembly and awaits the governor's action.

One of the bills signed into law addresses health insurance coverage for people with opioid substance use disorder and chronic addiction, which would:

- Strengthen parity in coverage of mental health and substance use disorders, in clear language aligned with federal regulation, and require that both methadone treatment services and medications to treat opioid overdoses be included as covered health benefits.
- Provide patients with substance use disorders with information they need about critical services, when they need it most – when they are being discharged from a hospital. The legislation outlines a process that hospitals can use to make sure that patients with substance use disorders leave with real-time information in hand about community-based facilities and providers that have openings for them. As they leave, patients would also have a follow-up appointment scheduled for them with licensed professionals who understand substance use disorders.
- Extend the safety net to other health care settings that patients with substance use disorders also consult – places like urgent care settings, freestanding clinics and emergency room diversion facilities. This legislation ensures that these settings also receive information about community and health care resources that can be consulted to support patients with substance use disorders. ❖

Providence Center, Care New England Seek Formal Affiliation

PROVIDENCE – Following a year of strategic and programmatic partnerships focused on enhancing the delivery of behavioral health care in the region, The Providence Center (TPC) and Care New England (CNE) announced they have begun negotiating the terms of a formal affiliation.

The formal agreement seeks to solidify the integration of behavioral health services across community-based and hospital-based systems in order to provide comprehensive treatment and support across the full continuum of care to patients with mental illness and substance use disorders. The larger focus on public health, a key element to Care New England's vision for the future of health care, includes a broader view that incorporates primary care, acute and specialty care, post-acute care and wellness.

TPC and CNE announced a strategic affiliation agreement in March 2013. The final affiliation agreement will require approval from the Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHHDH). ❖

Miriam Hospital Receives 8th Consecutive Award for Quality Care

PROVIDENCE – The Miriam Hospital has received the Get With The Guidelines-Stroke Gold-Plus Quality Achievement Award for using American Heart Association/American Stroke Association quality improvement measures when treating stroke patients. The distinction, which recognizes evidence-based clinical guidelines, acknowledges The Miriam's commitment to quality, excellent care. The hospital treats more than 600 stroke patients each year and has received the Gold or Gold Plus designation for stroke care every year since 2008.

"Receiving this acknowledgment from the Heart Association/American Stroke Association over the last eight years validates the proven, comprehensive model of care we use when treating our stroke patients," said **THOMAS F. TRACY, JR, MD**, chief medical officer and senior vice president of medical affairs at The Miriam Hospital. "Our exemplary team of physicians, nurses, and staff in The Miriam Stroke Center and emergency department work together as one to consistently administer the highest level of quality care."

"We are pleased to recognize The Miriam for their commitment and dedication to stroke care," said **DEEPAK L. BHATT, MD, MPH**, national chairman of the Get With The Guidelines steering committee and executive director of Interventional Cardiovascular Programs at Brigham and Women's Hospital and professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School. "Studies have shown that hospitals that consistently follow Get With The Guidelines quality improvement measures can reduce patients' length of stays and 30-day readmission rates and reduce disparity gaps in care."

The Get With The Guidelines-Stroke quality program embodies adoption of the latest, research-based treatment guidelines intended to speed recovery and reduce death and disability among stroke patients. In receiving the award, The Miriam met specific quality achievement measures for the rapid diagnosis and treatment of stroke patients. These measures include achieving and sustaining 85 percent or higher adherence to specific evidence-based guidelines over 24 consecutive months and aggressively using medications and risk-reduction therapies aimed at reducing death and disability and improving stroke patients' lives. ❖