

Division of Public Health hosts community opioid discussion



On Friday, May 4, the Division of Public Health hosted a community discussion entitled, “Opioids: A Community Conversation.” This public discussion took place at the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine building where panelists and community members met and talked about the current role that opioids play in communities, as well as the various jobs individuals in health care have when it comes to addressing opioid abuse.

“The opioid addiction has been around for years and years and years,” said Glen Hanson, a discussion panelist and Professor in the School of Dentistry at the University of Utah. “What we need to find is a comprehensive approach when dealing with the problem.”

Prior to open discussion, Hanson, along with fellow panelists, introduced themselves and shared their roles in communities across Salt Lake City, UT and how they see opioid misuse and problems throughout their careers.

“We have wasted too much time, money, and resources on all of the wrong issues,” said Matt Oehler, Patrol Sergeant for the South Salt Lake Police Department. “Everyone likes to point the finger, but the problems are not the opiates themselves, but the large level of personal accountability.”



Along with Hanson and Oehler, panelists included Linda Moore and Katherine Carlson from Project Reality, Kristen Reisig from Davis Behavioral Health, Eric Garland, Associate Dean for the Research College of Social Work at the University of Utah, and Adam Gordon, Professor in the Division of Epidemiology and Psychiatry.

After panelist introductions and a few words from Christy Porucznik, moderator and Associate Division Chief for Education in Division of Public Health, discussion then opened for attendees, who consisted of community members and University of Utah employees, to comment and ask questions regarding the opioid epidemic.

Questions and topics ranged from medical marijuana to health concerns and more. Beyond discussion, the event allowed community members to engage in conversation and network with people from across the valley.



“This event opened the door for many community agencies to form collaborations and network together,” said Tatiana Webb, Clinical Research Coordinator for the Department of Family and Preventive Medicine. “I am aware of several connections that took place from the department, as well as increased recruitment opportunities for the highlighted clinical trials taking place at our institution.”

Opioid abuse is an ever rising epidemic in communities across the nation. While it may never completely stop, it is collaborative and open discussion events where key player can network that will bring individuals and institutions one step closer to helping reduce the opioid problems seen throughout Salt Lake City and across the nation.

“I am excited for the networking that took place and hopefully new collaborations that will come from this meeting,” Webb said.

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