



Minnesota Hospital Association

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Rural Minnesota hospital to brief congressional leaders about successful opioid reduction efforts

CHI St. Gabriel's Health has decreased narcotics prescribed by more than 267,000 pills per year

Washington, D.C. – In two congressional briefings, CHI St. Gabriel's Health (CHI St. Gabriel's) leaders will speak to staff today representing members of congress from across the country regarding the rural hospital's successful efforts to reduce the flow of opioids into their community. The Minnesota hospital, serving the Morrison County population of 35,000 people, has helped 324 patients taper off controlled substances completely. In a year, that translates to more than 370,000 fewer controlled substance doses entering the community.

Before the program started, one of the community's four pharmacies alone filled an average of 48,000 controlled substance doses per month. Pain was the leading reason patients visited the hospital's emergency room, and in most cases, pain was treated with a narcotic medication.

In the community, CHI St. Gabriel's works with law enforcement, medical professionals, public health advocates and other community leaders to make opioid misuse a priority, ensuring that patients with chronic pain are treated with the safest medications, and those with substance use disorder receive medical treatment rather than ending up in the county's jail.

Inside the hospital, CHI St. Gabriel's created the "Controlled Substance Care Team" program to monitor patients on chronic pain medications and decide when medication is appropriate. If the team determines a patient may be misusing medication, they provide resources to treat his or her substance use disorder. The Controlled Substance Care Team's work has ultimately limited the number of pills that are diverted for misuse in the community.

In the first eight months, pain dropped from being the number one reason patients entered the emergency room to not even being in the top 20. In the program's first year, one of the community's four pharmacies reported a 23 percent decrease in controlled substance prescriptions.

"I believe that this program is scalable," said Dr. Kurt Devine, a CHI St. Gabriel's physician who co-leads the team, "I think the reality is, with the right funding so we can have the right people in clinics helping these patients, this can work in other communities."

U.S. Senator Al Franken (MN) and **U.S. Representative Rick Nolan (MN-08)** invited CHI St. Gabriel's Health leadership to Washington to share their results with congressional staff leaders. On September

27, the hospital's president, Lee Boyles, along with founders of the program Dr. Heather Bell and Dr. Kurt Devine, are set to explain the details of the work and successes of the initiative.

U.S. Rep. Rick Nolan remarked, "The CHI St. Gabriel's model works. It provides a solution that communities all over the country are looking for."

"In Minnesota and across this country, opioids have become a public health crisis," said U.S. Sen. Franken. "CHI St. Gabriel's program demonstrates that through collaboration, communities can help combat this epidemic. I'm glad to share this example with my colleagues in the Senate as we work toward addressing this epidemic nationally."

For more information about the program, www.mnhealthycommunities.org/minnesota-community-successfully-combats-opioid-epidemic/.

Nationally, half a million people died between 2000 and 2015 from drug overdoses; 91 Americans die every day from opioid overdoses. In Minnesota, opioid-related drug overdose deaths have increased tenfold in the past 15 years.

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