



# International Monterrey Model United Nations Simulation

American School Foundation of Monterrey



## Senate of the United States of America

**Topic:** The urgent need of finding a viable and comprehensive solution to the opioid epidemic

**Director:** Andres Gonzalez

**Moderator:** Balbina Morales

### I. Committee Background

The Senate of the United States is the heart of the legislative branch of the American government. It acts as the upper chamber of Congress, while the House of Representatives acts as the lower chamber. Every act and bill passes through Congress before it goes on towards the President of the U.S. for approval, or veto. Senators are familiar with having heavy influence in the government, as they play a vital role through the debates and decisions the country faces every day. First coming together in 1789, the US Senate was built as a more elaborate and sophisticated version of the House. Having less members in the chamber helps with the bigger sense of community and unity between its members, while granted these very senators a tenure of 6 years in order to better discuss the issues that pertain the nation. The Senate underwent significant modifications of procedure during Wilson's presidency, some of which provided for the election of senators by vote, instead of an appointment by the state legislatures. The title of Senate Majority Leader was also created, he or she would be the person that would guide each party through debate. The leader would be a person of seniority and great eloquence. Delegates will have the opportunity to work with peers across the aisle, hopefully supporting bipartisan agreements that will prevail and transcend beyond us. You will participate in debates on the most pressing issues that are facing the nation, trying to balance what your Senator believes in, and what one has to compromise to let matters move forward in a democratic way.

### II. Introduction

#### Description and Definition of the Topic

Opioids are defined as substances that affect opioid receptors to present morphine-like effects, and are used medically for pain relief, most commonly as an anesthetic agent. The drug gets its name from the opium plant, which was used to create the first of this pharmaceutical substance. As time and technology have advanced, so have these drugs. Consequently, even more medicaments are derived from these sources including: morphine, heroin, oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, fentanyl, among other illegal substances. These drugs can be prescribed by a doctor legally, but are known to have long-lasting repercussions. Opioids have been around since the 1990's, building itself a reputation of a substance notorious for inducing pleasure and relief on the consumer. Pharmacists were not aware of the effects the substance came to have on people when they were first sold, giving rise to the widespread abuse of opioids in America.

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Even if prescribed, people can easily abuse of these drugs, often leading to addiction, and in extreme cases death. According to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), 29% of the people prescribed to this drug misuse it. Furthermore, the number of fatalities due to the consumption of opioids in many states across the United States, such as: Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, Kentucky, and West Virginia, is alarming. Since 1999, the number of deaths due to opioids has quadrupled, and its widespread influence has led to a nationwide epidemic. The problem has grown to be one of the deadliest drug cases in American history. To this day, the response to this epidemic has not been effective seeing how the epidemic keeps growing at distressing rates.

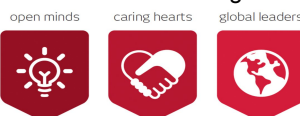
## The Problem

Even though this has clearly been a concerning issue in the United States over the past several years, until fairly recently, opioids have become easily accessible around the country—leading to an increased misuse of the drug. This massive influx of opioids in the country makes addiction a serious threat. To make matters worse, only 10% of the people who are suffering from a drug use disorder actually get specialty treatment (Lopez, 2017). The combined influx of the drugs, and the ignorance reflected by American citizens regarding these topics have only caused this crisis to keep growing. Moreover, once people get their hands on these opioids it is extremely hard for them to let go; they become physically dependent on these dangerous pharmaceuticals. If no help is provided, addiction to these substances only gets worse, and the drug abuse can cause many different withdrawal symptoms like diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, rapid heartbeat and high blood pressure. Nevertheless, in many cases these symptoms could lead to an eventual overdose.

The opioid epidemic has already been declared a national emergency by United States President Donald Trump; in other words, the crisis is still happening and there has not been a strong effort to tackle the ordeal. Pharmaceutical companies have shown minimal effort to control the use of these drugs, and drug traffickers are also inundating the country with illegally produced opioids. This problem has now reached a level where more than 90 Americans die from opioid overuse everyday, and the total economic burden of prescription opioid misuse is \$78.5 million a year (NIH, 2017). The economic burden of prescription basically depends on the number of people with prescriptions for opioids who actually misuse them and end up having several opioid-related issues; eventually creating a huge economic burden. This problem is the result culmination of events that has been present for a very long time. It started brewing in the late 1990's, when doctors and pharmaceutical companies began to release opioids while claiming that they were harmless, for they wouldn't cause addiction; these lies only led to the increase of the drug sales, giving rise to the crisis that is happening today. Adding on, it is even estimated that if things keep escalating at this rate, over 650,000 Americans could die from opioid overdose in the next decade (Lopez, 2017). This predicament is only getting worse as time goes by and the collaboration of all countries is needed to find a suitable solution for this developing epidemic.

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## III. History of the Topic

### Chronological History of the Topic

The opioid epidemic in the United States is the result of a long series of events that culminated leading to the situation the country faces right now. What began this series of problems was the creation of morphine and other painkillers during the second half of the 1800's. The use of these treatments steadily increased over time, as soldiers were often prescribed with these drugs before and after war.

The commercialisation of opioid related drugs began in the US in the early 1900's, when the Saint James Society began a movement to provide free samples of the newly created heroin to all morphine addicted citizens, including Civil War Veterans. The Smoking Opium Exclusion Act, passed in 1909, outlawed the possession, use, and importation of smoking opium, but did not prevent or penalize the creation and distribution of medication containing opiates.

In the 1920's, the mass sale of heroin stopped due to The Heroin Act of 1924. The act made the possession, importation, manufacturing, and use of heroin illegal, even for medical purposes. A vast number of people in the medical community had a mixed response to this act, since many of them saw heroin as a substitute and cure for alcohol addiction. Many of the medicines made from opioids which were already being sold; however, drugs such as morphine, codeine, and oxycodone were still legal for doctors' use.

After the FDA approved oxycodone as an aspirin tablet in the 1950's, this drug became easily accessible, and since then, abuse of prescription opioids containing oxycodone has been a problem for the US. In 1970, The Controlled Substances Act was passed, which began to classify drugs into five different schedules. The aforementioned schedules were divided according to shared characteristics found in substances—harmfulness, potential for abuse or addiction, and medicinal value—akin to a pharmaceutical classification for medicine. These classifications allowed opioid drugs to be regulated more thoroughly by federal law. In 1973, the government took action against the war on drugs by creating The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA).

The Federal Government of the United States was able to protect its people from opiates up to a certain degree, but by the time soldiers were coming back from the Vietnam war in the 1970s, it was not uncommon to learn that they had become addicted to these substances. This rising number of addictions sparked the government's harsh crackdown on drugs in the decade to come.

The 1980's brought problems of its own with the appearance of new drugs including crack cocaine, which led to the creation of massive public service campaigns against the use of illegal substances. This campaign manifested itself through many television and media advertisements aimed especially at younger audiences, all part of a "War on Drugs", which aimed to take down and discourage the future use of drugs.

During the 1990's, physicians found new ways of treating pain, completely shifting the prescription opioid landscape. In response to a need to manage pain, physicians formulated a number of prescription opioids that were still used during the 2000's such as fentanyl and

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hydromorphone. By 1999 approximately four million Americans, ages 12 and older, were using prescription drugs non-medically (C. Bollinger).

Today, the effects of the Opioid Epidemic continue to be present, as death tolls linked directly to opioid overdose are quickly rising in many states like New Hampshire. Increased attention to these substances has been addressed by the FDA and CDC, but significant discoveries haven't been made as there is still no concrete evidence of the long term effects of opioids. In August of 2017, the president of the United States, Donald Trump, addressed the issue, saying: "It's a national emergency. We're going to spend a lot of time, a lot of effort, and a lot of money on the opioid crisis.". While no concrete action has been taken as of early October 2017, many still hope that this administration will target the epidemic at hand.

## Historical Case Studies

Before the 1900's, the United States was already struggling with the abuse of opioids. Throughout the Gilded Age, Civil War Veterans who were treated with morphine and opium to heal their wounds and illnesses during battle, ended up addicted to these drugs. Especially in the southern part of the US, where nearly 80,000 to 100,000 citizens grew addicted to opium (Day, 1868). In 1898, the Bayer Co. produced a new opioid which spread commercially. Since its creation, it was seen as a "wonder drug." During the early 1900's, heroin was used as cough syrup and worked better than morphine as a painkiller, its use became so common and efficient that it was even used by children. The number of heroin addicts rose exponentially, until it finally became illegal in 1923. Since the 1950's, the Golden Triangle, a region consisting of border territories Thailand, Burma and Laos, has been the greatest opium-producing area in the world. However, Afghanistan later became the world's largest producer of the substance, especially when the production reached an all time high in the year 2006, the nation being responsible for 70 percent of the world's opium.

## New Mexico

Throughout the US, there are many states that are in extreme danger of breaking into an opioid epidemic in the upcoming years, one of these states being New Mexico. Rio Arriba County has the highest opioid overdose mortality rates in New Mexico, and the second highest in the United States (Wells, 2017). Santa Fe County is also one of the counties around New Mexico currently affected by the opioid epidemic that continually grows; because of this, Santa Fe had the highest number of opioid-related deaths in New Mexico in 2016 with a total of 142 (Wells, 2017). Nevertheless, the New Mexico Department of Health is implementing a vast array of solutions which can eventually impede the issue, and these solutions should be followed by other states as well. For example, there has been a 5% decline in the amount of opioids prescribed around the state, and there has been a 63% increase in the use of the Prescription Monitoring Program (Opioid Prescriptions Significantly Decline in New Mexico, 2017). All in all, even though there is solid progress surrounding the state as consequence of great legislations by

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Governor Susana Martinez, there are still many issues which need to be fixed as soon as possible, in order to avoid this epidemic from increasing in magnitude.

## Maryland

In the state of Maryland, deaths due to opioids have skyrocketed. From 2015 to 2016, there was a 66% increase in deaths from heroin and fentanyl (Cohn, 2017). State officials started to take action against the epidemic in various ways. They provided guidance to doctors and pharmaceuticals prescribing highly addictive painkillers. They also created a hotline to connect people to available treatments. Furthermore, they created the naloxone “reversal” drug and allowed all citizens to buy it without prescription or training. The drug reverses or prevents the effects of opioids which include; sedation, depression, and hypotension. It has saved over 800 people in the state. The city of Baltimore is currently running out of supplies to develop this drug. Educational campaigns are currently developed for all citizens. Maryland legislators passed a law implementing opioid education four times as a student; twice in elementary, once in high school, and once in college. All campuses in the state are fully stocked by law with the naloxone drug. Most of the overdoses seen in Maryland are from college students, not typical 18-22 years old, but older students attending two-year and technical colleges. The Center for Disease Control (CDC) has recommended all states to monitor programs’ databases, regulate clinics and doctors, and increase in treatment and access to nexolone. Maryland has been following those recommendations and introducing the education component, crucial for all citizens.

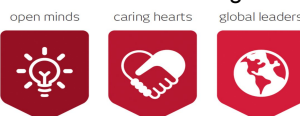
## West Virginia

West Virginia is the state in the US with the highest rate of overdose due to opioids. In 1999, West Virginia’s overdose fatality rate was far below the national average. In 2015, the state’s drug overdose rate was of 41.5 cases per 100,000 residents; the highest in the country, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The state’s drug epidemic claims the lives of more than three out of every 100 deaths. The state with a population of less than two million people has been acclaimed as the “coal country”, for its numerous jobs demanding heavy labor. These types of jobs leave workers with a lot of injuries, therefore leading to the consumption of drugs such as opioids to alleviate the affliction. The declining economy and rise of unemployment has also been one of the greatest causes of opioid abuse, especially over the last twenty years. West Virginia has the second highest rate of job loss, at 6.5%, losing 19,100 jobs between the years 2014 and 2015. However, a new DEA pilot program known as the “360 Strategy” is working with both community groups and law enforcement to push addicts to treatment instead of sending them to jail, as has been done in the past. The program also promotes the education on such drugs and the dangers that they hold.

## Delaware

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The State Department of Health and Social Services received 3 million dollars in 2017 to fight the heroin epidemic, specifically focusing on improving Delaware's treatment programs and services. The General Assembly provided 1 of the 3 million to this department to improve access to treatment, and a plan for this money is due by the end of 2017. The other 2 million dollars came from the 21st Century Cures Act with the purpose of developing "...a more coordinated, comprehensive, engaging and person-centered treatment system in Delaware." (Horn, 2017). If improvement is seen, the department will receive an extra \$2 million to continue developing their plan. In 2015, approximately 27 million Americans reported current use of illegal drugs or abuse of prescription drugs. But out of the 27, only 10% of them receive access to treatment against these addictions. With Delaware's attempt to increase access, this percent is believed to improve drastically. Delaware state police face their own battle daily, with heroin and other opioid addicts and dealers out in the streets statewide.

## Deadliest Opioids

- Grey Death

The Grey Death is an extremely strong street opioid (5,000 times more powerful than heroin) which has come into light recently.. The name of this dangerous creation comes from the fact that it looks like cement powder and can be lethal in very small doses. The drug was unknown before it started popping out around metro Atlanta, and since then, it has also been spotted in Alabama, Ohio and Pennsylvania (Nedelman, 2017). When examined, investigators have detected similar molecules to those in heroin, fentanyl and even U-47700 inside the drug, which are all dangerous opioids as well. The Gulf Coast High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area even reported that there have been several overdose-related deaths across Georgia and Alabama, which are linked to this lethal drug. Furthermore, a forensic chemist by the name of Deneen Kilcrease mentioned her extreme concern about the potency of Grey Death since "...a lethal dose is not even visible to the eye" (Nedelman, 2017). Investigators have not concretely found what this drug is completely made of, still creating a great amount of doubt; if not stopped quickly, this addictive drug will keep spreading and killing civilians around the US.

- Carfentanil

Carfentanil is currently one of the most potent opioids , almost as strong as Grey Death. In the words of Deneen Kilcrease: "A single, pure flake of carfentanil can tranquilize a 2,000 pound elephant. The drug is 100 times more potent than fentanyl and 10,000 times more potent than morphine" (Nedelman, 2017). To make matters worse, she also said that the drug can "...float through the air or be absorbed by touch." (Nedelman, 2017). Because of the potency of this pharmaceutical, it is one of the most feared opioids; unfortunately, this also makes it one of the most desired drugs by users. Therefore, carfentanil has experienced a drastic spread through the US, leaving almost certain death in its wake. Likewise, there have been 33 deaths in North Carolina related to carfentanil overdose, and this is just one of the states currently affected by this deadly drug. To add on, this drug was synthesized in 1974, and was designed for veterinarians to use on large animals; that is to say, the drug was never meant to be used on

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humans (Bordas, 2017). All in all, this extraordinarily deadly drug should've never been put in the hands of the people; ever since then, carfentanyl hasn't, and will not cease to spread if nothing is done soon.

- Fentanyl

Fentanyl is a type of opioid for pain medication that is used for anesthesia after surgeries or in end-of-life settings. It's extremely easy to overdose and get addicted, marked to have an extremely depressive effect on the respiratory system. The substance's dose is very difficult to measure, one more grain of salt and it can produce effects similar to those of heroin; fentanyl, in other words, dances in a very thin line between euphoria and death. In fact, drug deaths from Fentanyl from 2015 to 2016 doubled in the US killing over 20,000 people (Katz, 2017). It is calculated to be 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine. In May, Massachusetts had over 1,899 records for opioid usage and 69% tested for Fentanyl (Helmore, 2017). To add on, The National Center for Health Statistic, a division of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is closely updating a monthly basis of the opioid crisis including big marks of fentanyl. The increase of the fatalities in these years led the CDC to blame the drug for drastically exacerbating the opioid epidemic in the US. Currently, the drug is manufactured in China and smuggled across borders. The opioid is not well taken care of, doctors and pharmaceuticals aren't taking adequate steps in prescribing the drug which is one of the factors of the epidemic.

- U-47700

U-4770 is a synthetic opioid analgesic drug of the benzamide chemical class developed by a team in the 1970's. It relaxes and sedates your whole body, and can be used as a stronger version of morphine; seven to eight times. To add on, it's a relatively deadly new drug, known as "Pinky", "Pink", or "U4". The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) stated the drug is on the list of Schedule I drugs, and is currently determining if it should stay there permanently. The Schedule 1 (Class I) are a list of illegal drugs determined to have a high abuse potential, severe safety concerns, and no potential medical use such as cocaine and heroin. It is currently being smuggled into the US. The first incident involving this drug was in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 2015. It has been the source for overdoses in over 10 states (Zalkind, 2017). It often occurs that the buyers don't know what they are getting; in other words, all they know is they're getting something related to fentanyl. U-4770 was declared a controlled substance in Finland in 2015, and defined as narcotic in Sweden in 2017. In the US, it has not been criminalized yet, as prosecutors can file charges under the Controlled Substance Analogue Act, and jurors don't truly understand the science behind it.

## Past UN Actions

In 2004, the World Health Organization (WHO) published a series of guidelines created with the purpose of reducing the amount of deaths due to opioid overdoses, from drugs such as morphine, heroin and oxycodone. These guidelines included a variety of recommendations including the use of an inexpensive medication by the name of naloxone, which can reverse addiction and overdose from opioid and save thousands of lives.

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Since 2014, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) worked through the Regional Programme, in order to develop plans aimed at establishing evidence-based rule of law, drug control and criminal justice responses. Moreover, the UN has used the available technology to run monitoring and assessment systems between the years 2014 and 2015, in order to have accurate and enhanced reports on the issue.

On November 4, 2014, the World Health Organization released updated guidelines with the purpose of eradicating the widespread opioid epidemic—using naxalone, a relatively cheap medicine which purportedly reverses the effects of an opioid overdose, and can potentially save lives while preventing the further use of harmful substances. Noting the potential that naxalone possesses, the World Health Organization advocated for the substance to be available especially to patients who pose a high risk of overdose, as well as to train others to avoid addiction. The World Health Organization is basing itself off of the effects seen in countries like Scotland and the US, where recent surveys suggested “...that the distribution of approximately 50,000 naloxone kits through local opioid overdose prevention programmes had resulted in more than 10,000 uses to reverse overdoses” (Community Management of Opioid Overdose, 2014).

In March of 2017, the United Nations held its 60th commission on narcotic drugs in Vienna, where the international community unanimously voted in favor of controlling the transit of chemicals used to make fentanyl. The vote would then result in the regulation of the production, sale, and export of fentanyl precursors with the intention of decreasing the consequent use of fentanyl and other opioids worldwide.

## IV. Key Players and Points of View

### Donald Trump

US President Donald Trump declared the deadliest drug crisis in America to be a “national shame”. (Vaidyanathan, October 26) The president affirmed to attenuate the drug abuse and addiction that has taken more than 59,000 lives in 2016. He declared the Opioid Crisis a public health emergency, back in August 2017. With that said, his directive has not released any new funds to tackle the crisis, although recently, he directed the Department of Health and Human Services on October 26th, 2017. The president addressed the issue and signed the presidential memorandum, directed towards his health secretary, to declare a nationwide public health emergency. Additionally, he ordered all federal agencies to take necessary measures in order to decrease the number of deaths caused by the opioid drug. The order also addressed regulations that will allow states to have more leeway in the use of federal funds to approach the problem. The White House will work through the Public Health Emergency Fund, which currently only holds \$57,000. Moreover, the Trump Administration will also work with Congress to endorse additional funding. The directive will also include further access to telemedicine —patients can now receive prescriptions without seeing a doctor —, grants to those who struggle finding work due to addiction. This will also result in the hiring of more people to tackle the issue and finally, the movement of federal funds from HIV

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treatments to Opioids, since often times, users share infected needles. Advocates believe this is a step towards raising awareness, while critics believe it is not enough.

## Pharmaceutical Companies

Pharmaceutical companies are an important group of players in this problem. Companies like Pfizer, Novartis, Johnson & Johnson, and Purdue Pharma, among others, have been highly influential in the pronounced effects of the opioid epidemic. As a consequence of aggressive marketing tactics in which pharmaceutical-sponsored education programs were established, as well the labelling of opioids and similar pharmaceuticals as “all-purpose” medication, the use of this medication has skyrocketed in recent history. Furthermore, there have even been cases of blatant false advertising and misleading information, such as when Purdue Pharma advertised their own medicine, OxyContin, as a ‘non-addictive’ drug, practical in addressing any symptoms of pain. It is through these questionable methods of advertising that companies get their biggest profits, for Purdue Pharma generated \$3.1 billion thanks to OxyContin sales only, mostly due to their aforementioned advertising practices.

It is also important to acknowledge the importance of this group’s constant lobbying in favor of their own pharmaceuticals, with some companies going to such lengths as funding research groups that further promote their medication. Due in part to a previously underdeveloped Food and Drug Administration, companies benefited even further, as no thorough regulation had been made for substances like opioids. Companies are also taking little to no action to tackle the illicit use of their products, making this another major point of contention regarding the ongoing epidemic; in brief, pharmaceuticals may be trying to advocate for stronger regulation in the public market, but are doing too little too late on the subject of contraband and recreational use of their medication.

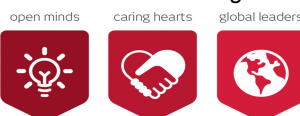
## Bernie Sanders

Independent Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders recently talked about the opioid crisis during a Democratic Presidential debate. He states that the US government has to talk to pharmaceutical companies, medical professionals, and doctors to “get their act together” (Sanders, 2016). He thinks it’s necessary for addiction treatment for people caught up in opioid addiction and firmly believes that the treatment towards this problem needs to go into mental health and addiction issue. He states, “we need to understand that addiction is a disease, not a criminal activity”. He labeled the War on Drugs a failure; decades of war and millions of lives lost. In his opinion, the US never succeeded to end the opioid epidemic crisis. It has destroyed people's lives by putting non-violent offenders in jail. Thousands of Americans are being incarcerated because of dealing with opioid drugs but since they are addicted, they aren’t in their right mind to make a choice. Sanders strongly believes instead of sending them to prison they should be educated and find them jobs so in the future they don’t have to deal with drugs again.

## John McCain

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The opioid epidemic has been a huge problem in Arizona during recent years, with the death toll rising year by year; without an end in sight. Because of this, Senator John McCain has targeted the over-prescription of opioids, in an attempt to lessen the growth of this horrible epidemic. It was announced on April 2017 that they “would limit opioid prescriptions for acute pain to a seven-day supply”, but the legislation would not apply to chronic pain restrictions (Harding, 2017). Knowing the legislation’s importance in the long run, McCain said that: “We have a long way to go to end the scourge of drugs across our communities, but this legislation is an important step forward in preventing people from getting hooked on these deadly drugs” (Harding, 2017). Fearful of the alarming problem all around the state and the country, he joined forces with Senator Kirsten Gillibrand to create this legislation which will be enforced by the Drug Enforcement Agency. Hopefully this legislation will be helpful in the long run so that it can be implemented into other states as well; nevertheless this legislation alone will not stop the epidemic, all the states must come together to find both short and long term solutions to solve this crisis before it’s too late.

## V. Possible Solutions

It is essential to formulate a realistic and feasible solution that will help alleviate the issue. One possible solution that may be considered is expanding the drug treatment industry, as well as addiction support groups. This is of significant importance, as consumers must receive proper encouragement for a successful recovery.

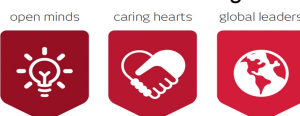
Furthermore, it is also important to raise awareness on the issue. This would emphasize the dangers of such addiction, that must not be confused with a disease. Informing the audience about the repercussions that may follow the issue will altogether help prevent the substance abuse. Adding on, an essential part of spreading awareness should actually be to emphasize the prevention of the drugs themselves. This is key to solving the issue, as avoiding the drug altogether makes the entire crisis a lot easier to solve; so stopping people from actually trying these drugs will greatly decrease the number of people who get addicted.

Moreover, calling for legal regulations of illegal drugs will also lessen the issue in the long-term, since organizing the laws and punishments regarding the problem at hand would help better control the crisis. In addition, other small regulations can also be added to stop the spreading of this epidemic as well. For example, the amount of opioids should be regulated to stop it from spreading all over the country. Not only will this help to stop the issue from spreading, but these new regulations can also be instrumental in stopping the people who are causing the issue. All in all, the senators of the country should work together to create laws and regulations that fit all states to rapidly stop this crisis from escalating, as well as avoid its resurgence.

Alas, most opioid drugs are not manufactured in the US. Nevertheless, the influx of drugs happens through the US borders everyday; increasing the policy on borders is crucial to avoid opioid drugs, such as heroin and fentanyl from entering the country. Additionally, Congress passed a bill granting one billion dollars towards drug treatment to be put in place for

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two years. Likewise, over the years studies have led to the conclusion that receiving treatment has an extremely high cost. The US government needs to find a way to make treatment more accessible and cheaper for all addicts, while dropping the quantity of accessible opioids for the public. All in all, the opioid epidemic is a problem which will only spread like a wildfire around the US; spreading until it is too strong to be controlled. Hence, the senate needs to find a series of viable short and long term solutions to stop the problem at hand, before it is too late.

## VI. Current Status

The opioid crisis is an ongoing issue that requires immediate attention. Professionals remain on the firm belief that the United States is in burst of the outbreak, having more than two million Americans addicted and dependent on such drug. Despite the crisis, there has been some recent activity aiming to raise awareness and incite some action against the epidemic.

On March 29th 2017, President Donald Trump signed an executive order calling for the establishment of a commission to combat drug addiction and the opioid crisis (Santhanam, 2017). For this group, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie will be acting as the chairman together with the President's son-in-law, Jared Kushner. The commission's main goal is to issue a report 90 days after its establishment, detailing its findings and data regarding the opioid crisis in America. After doing so, the commission would most likely dissolve, or continue working, should more time be required.

Likewise, on July 31st 2017, the White House panel analyzed the epidemic of the nation and released an interim report, requesting a national public health emergency to be announced by the President in order to take action on the issue.

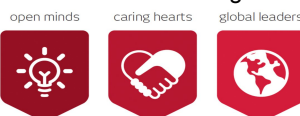
On August of this year, President Trump held a press briefing on the issue on his New Jersey golf club, claiming that a stronger law enforcement response is needed while refraining from declaring a national public health emergency. Later on during the same month, the White House issued a press release that stated that Trump's administration is taking all necessary measures to work against the issue. However, there continued to be no formal declaration of a national public health emergency, meaning there was no funding or resources being used to help opioid addicts, and no prevention programs being put into action.

Furthermore, on September 22nd of 2017, pharmaceutical juggernaut CVS announced its new implementation of restrictions for the prescriptions for opioids: a limited seven-day supply to patients who are new to pain therapy.

It was until October 26th of this year that President Trump finally declared the opioid epidemic a national public health emergency specifically addressing the East Room of the White House to which he said that today's generation could potentially end the opioid epidemic. Regardless, this state of emergency raises questions, for there are doubts concerning the lack of federal funding on this imperative crisis. This program will act to enforce new, safer and regulated practices for federally employed prescribers, while also establishing better regulations for opioid prescription. At the same time, the initiative will also work to fund research in hopes of developing non-addictive painkillers for replacement of medication that is already in use. The

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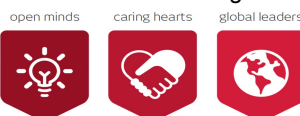
President himself promised to make advertisement a large focus of the campaign, vowing to raise awareness and overcome the immense levels of addictions that currently plague America. Despite these promises, the United States has yet to see the results of this initiative.

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