



On “Taking Aim at Virginia’s Opioid Crisis through Changes in Public Health Law”

Thank you for the timely article (*Virginia Lawyer*, October 2017) on the Virginia opioid crisis and the combined efforts of the state health commissioner, professional licensing boards and the General Assembly to address the opioid issue through heightened public awareness, new regulations, and laws. As a healthcare attorney who regularly represents medical professionals — including those who prescribe opioid pain medication — the article shed light on regulations likely to impact my clients and provided helpful insight on the commonwealth’s initiative to build awareness and prevention.

The scope of the epidemic and the speed at which opioid use is expanding requires those of us who advise health

professionals to keep our clients apprised of the evolving science impacting policy developments and regulatory issues. As the article explains, these changes impact nearly every aspect of practice, from in-office protocols and medical record keeping to limitations upon the types and duration of medications that can or should be prescribed. And, while not specifically addressed in the article, the new regulations may also create new continuing education requirements for certain health professionals.

Further illustrating how quickly this landscape is changing is the fact that since the article was published, the White House has directed the acting Health and Human Services secretary to declare the opioid crisis a national public health emergency. While it is uncertain what legislative changes will follow, the declaration makes it clear that the administration intends to bring greater attention to the problem.

Given these events as well as the speed at which the opioid epidemic has emerged, it is important for Virginia lawyers to stay apprised of these emerging regulatory developments at both the state and federal level. Thus, we can serve as better advocates for health professionals and successfully counsel clients to ensure that they are in compliance in serving and treating the needs of their patients.

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Letters

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