

Treating opioid use disorder in prison

By SACHINI BANDARA, JENNY WEN AND N. JIA AHMAD

In Maryland, opioid overdoses now kill more people each year than guns and car crashes combined. With more than 2,000 deaths in 2017, Maryland ranks among the five states with the highest rates of opioid-related overdose deaths at double the national average.

The state needs to make progress in saving lives — and fast. A terrific opportunity is the Medication Assisted Treatment in Detention Act (House Bill 116/ Senate Bill 846). This legislation would require jails and prisons in Maryland to provide access to all three FDA-approved medications for opioid use disorder to individuals during incarceration. With some modest improvements, the legislation, if passed, could begin driving overdoses down within a year of implementation.

In Maryland, people recently released from detention are 8 to 10 times more likely to die from overdose than the general population. When detained, people lose their tolerance to opioids and do not receive the necessary treatment, placing them at extremely high risk for drug overdose and death after release if they were to take the same dose of opioids as before. This bill would be a much-needed intervention because it increases access to a key tool in fighting the opioid epidemic: evidence-based medications. Providing evidence-based treatment during detention and ensuring coordinated care after release will put people on the path to recovery. This will save lives, reduce crime and improve entire communities' safety and health.

The FDA has approved methadone, buprenorphine and depot naltrexone for opioid use disorder. Studies show that medications for opioid use disorder like buprenorphine and methadone are much more effective for treating opioid use disorder than counseling alone. These

medications reduce the risk of dying from overdose, decrease illicit opioid use, increase treatment retention and reduce infections of HIV and hepatitis C. This means treatment not only helps the person with addiction, but also their families and communities.

Access to all three FDA-approved medications is essential. People respond differently to different medications and may have medical or other reasons for their choice. Unfortunately, misconceptions around these medications are common. Policymakers sometimes question when someone might be able to be “weaned off methadone,” suggesting that treatments for opioid use disorders simply substitute one addiction for another.

As public health students and researchers, we want to clarify these common misconceptions. Addiction is a chronic brain disease characterized by craving and compulsive drug-seeking. Appropriately managed treatment medications do not create these behaviors nor induce euphoria. These medications provide medical treatment for a chronic health condition — which often means that patients may never be able to stop taking the medication safely. We would not think of a diabetic as “addicted” to insulin or expect them to be “weaned off” of insulin; instead we think of insulin as a life-saving treatment. The same should apply to these medications.

The benefits of medication for opioid use disorder have been specifically tested in prisons and jails, which is why national expert groups such as the American Society for Addiction Medicine and American Correctional Association recommend its use. One study found that incarcerated individuals with opioid use disorder treated by medications had an 87 percent lower risk of death than those untreated. Improved survival can continue post-release, especially when individuals are linked to on-going treatment in the community. In Rhode

Island, a statewide program similar to the one proposed by the Medication Assisted Treatment in Detention Act resulted in a 60 percent decrease in overdose mortality following release.

Currently, access to medications for opioid use disorder in Maryland correctional facilities is extremely limited. This is not only inhumane; it's unconstitutional. Denying access to treatment violates the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution, which bars cruel and unusual punishment, and the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act. According to an analysis by the law firm Akin Gump, continuing to limit access to medications could result in Maryland “being forced to implement court-mandated reforms, and facing costly litigation from individuals with opioid use disorder, advocacy organizations, and the Department of Justice.”

The Medication Assisted Treatment in Detention Act is an important step forward. The bill could be strengthened by adding a requirement for clear guidelines and timelines around treatment, creating strong oversight and technical assistance mechanisms and bolstering requirements around post-release planning. These plans should include health insurance enrollment and referral appointments to providers who can continue to provide medication treatment in the community.

Passing this bill will expand treatment for opioid use disorder and save lives. Given the scale of Maryland's opioid crisis, it is not an opportunity we can waste.

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Md. demands public access to police misconduct investigations

By BRANDON SCOTT AND WILL JAWANDO

Our constituents want effective constitutional policing that reduces violence in their communities. But they also want — and deserve — transparency and accountability. The communities officers are sworn to protect, and whose taxpayer dollars support law enforcement, deserve to know that their local police departments are investigating misconduct complaints diligently and equitably.

In Montgomery County, we are fighting for the Law Enforcement Trust and Transparency Act, which would require independent investigations of police-involved deaths. This is needed because there is a serious lack of confidence that law enforcement can police itself — especially when the stakes are the highest and a resident has lost his or her life.

In 2016, the ACLU of Maryland released a report showing that between 2010 and 2015, at least 130 people across our state — the vast majority of them black, and too many unarmed — died in police encounters. Eleven of those deaths were in Montgomery County, and 30 were in Baltimore City.

In the city, residents are fighting for a truly independent and effective Civilian Review Board that can thoroughly investigate the hundreds of police misconduct complaints lodged each year. Every day, residents are denied information about how the Baltimore Police Department investigates such complaints. In fact, the Department of Justice noted that “community members are unable to obtain information about BPD's complaint and discipline systems at almost every step in the process.”

Other limits reach throughout the state. Currently, under the Maryland Public Information Act, police misconduct complaint files are considered protected “personnel records” that may never be disclosed under any circumstances. This means that if the police department fails to discipline an officer for misconduct, and the community calls for the department to explain its decision, the department is categorically barred from revealing anything in the complaint file.

We can fix this problem. We must fix this problem. The General Assembly is currently considering several bills to allow greater transparency in the way law enforcement handles allegations of misconduct. Regardless of what bill makes it through to final passage, we urge state lawmakers to honor the resounding and unambiguous demand we have heard from our communities: We must have access to investigations into all police misconduct.

This basic level of transparency is necessary for both individuals who file police misconduct complaints and the public, which needs to know what actions police take in their name. This transparency would help our communities know that their complaints of police brutality and misconduct are taken seriously by the officers sworn to protect them.

The basis for any healthy relationship is trust. Research consistently shows that communities of color have higher levels of distrust in law enforcement — often for good reason. A Pew Research poll, for example, found that only 14 percent of blacks had high confidence in police and 31 percent of Latino people did.

Transparency would go a long way toward bridging this divide. It has been proven time and time again that crime reduction is tied to police departments' ability to be transparent and open with residents, who are more willing to work with officers they trust.

Marylanders cannot continue to be denied the basic transparency that would allow them to hold their local departments accountable. It is time for Maryland to do better.

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Actress Felicity Huffman stands inside a federal courthouse in Los Angeles after being indicted in a university admissions scam. DAVID MCNEW/GETTY-AFP

ZIP code admissions

By KURT LANDGRAF

Three years ago, Washington College enrolled a young woman from San Diego as one of the first scholars in a new program that provides full tuition, room and board for high-ability, high-need students. Her parents were hardly celebrities. In fact, they had taken on heavy debt to pay for two years of college for their first-born child before realizing that they couldn't afford more student loans for their second, Alicia, a bright and motivated student who aspired to a career as a physical therapist.

Washington College sought out the younger sibling and gave her a rare opportunity to earn a debt-free education at one of the nation's best small liberal arts and sciences colleges, where I'm now privileged to serve as president. Since venturing from the West Coast to Maryland's Eastern Shore, Alicia has thrived academically and socially in a close-knit community where she is now paying it forward. The double-major in biology and Hispanic studies is president of her sorority, a resident assistant and coach of women's rugby, the club team she organized with 22 active members. And she's a mentor to other first-generation students recruited through the Washington Scholars program, which enrolls 10 students each year, fully funding a college education for up to 40 students at a time.

In the grand scheme of things, our program is a drop in the bucket, given just

how much the educational system favors the wealthy. But it's what all of us in higher education should be doing. We need to do more for those people without the means to game the system, as we've seen with the recent college admissions scandal involving cheating on standardized tests and bribing college coaches.

Frankly, I'm surprised at the level of naiveté regarding the idea that people with financial means would do such a thing — it happens all the time. There has been and continues to be a thriving, perfectly legal industry in hiring private consultants to coach kids from freshman or sophomore year in high school right on up to the Ivy of their choice. And if you're not that wealthy, maybe you can at least spend \$500 to get your junior a special class in how to take the SAT to improve scores.

Likewise, remember that districts with higher tax bases can direct more money to their public schools. If you live in Princeton, N.J., as I did when I was CEO of Educational Testing Service, your children will go to well-financed public schools, getting the support and learning they need to put them in a better position for admission to a good college. Twelve miles down the road in Trenton, it's another story. And despite the best efforts of ETS and other testing organizations to make sure that the testing instruments are psychometrically accurate and non-discriminatory, education in our country remains a matter of ZIP codes.

So, what can we do about it?

First, U.S. News & World Report and the other top college guides need to stop putting so much emphasis on the SAT and ACT. They should not be the overweighted measure of a student's potential. That said, more states should mandate SAT testing for every high school student as a prerequisite to graduation. In states like Delaware where this is the norm, countless students who might not otherwise have even considered college score well on the SAT, making them eligible for financial aid that can help them attain the goal of a higher education.

And, colleges and universities need to look beyond test scores and GPAs and consider where their applicants are coming from. Are they from a “wealthy” ZIP code or an “underserved” ZIP code? How can they do more to make college possible for students from the latter?

These indictments aren't a scandal. Rather, they are a symptom of the real issue that our country needs to address, and that is the economic inequities that are built into our system of education and our nation as a whole. It's our moral imperative to reach out to students of promise who might just need a helping hand to achieve their dreams.

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