



# JOHN R. KASICH

GOVERNOR • STATE OF OHIO

---

## Communication Department

### **EMPOWERING PRESCRIBERS & PHARMACISTS TO PREVENT OPIATE ABUSE**

Prescribers and pharmacists are on the front lines of Ohio's fight against opiate abuse. Getting them the right information in the right place at the right time enables them to make a real difference and reduce the likelihood of opiate abuse. Starting in 2011, the state began implementing rules requiring prescribers and pharmacists to utilize the State Board of Pharmacy's Ohio Automated Rx Reporting System (OARRS) to provide a complete view of what additional controlled substance medications a patient may be receiving from other prescribers or pharmacies. Recent promising data shows that doctor shopping, the practice of obtaining controlled substances from multiple healthcare practitioners without the prescribers' knowledge of the other prescriptions has decreased and the number of opiate prescriptions has dropped. That success must continue if Ohio wants to make a real difference in the fight against opiate misuse, abuse and overdose.

**Ohio Automated Rx Reporting System (OARRS) Is a Powerful Tool in Ohio's Opiate Fight:** OARRS is a tool created to track the dispensing of controlled prescription drugs to Ohio patients. It is designed to monitor suspected abuse or diversion (i.e. diversion of legally prescribed drugs for illicit purposes), and can give a prescriber or pharmacist critical information regarding a patient's controlled substance prescription history. This information can help prescribers and pharmacists identify high-risk patients who would benefit from early interventions such as pharmacist consultation with the prescriber regarding a patient's controlled substance use, switching to alternative non-opiate therapies, further assessment of addiction risk or mental health concerns and, when appropriate, referral to an addiction medicine specialist.

**Ohio is Making Progress in Reducing Opiate Prescriptions:** Ohio established new prescribing guidelines for chronic pain in October 2013 to provide prescribers with clear information about best practices. At the same time, the State Board of Pharmacy has been strengthening OARRS. As a result, the number of prescriber and pharmacist queries using OARRS increased from 778,000 in 2010 to 9.3 million in 2014 and Ohio is making impressive progress in curbing painkiller prescriptions, including:

- The number of prescription opiates dispensed to Ohio patients in 2014 decreased by more than 40 million doses (5.27 percent) compared to 2013.
- The number of individuals "doctor shopping" for controlled substances including opiates decreased from more than 3,100 in 2009 to approximately 960 in 2014.
- From 2013 to 2014, there was a nearly 11 percent decline in the number of patients prescribed opiates at a dose higher than the current guidelines recommend to ensure patient safety.
- Ohio patients receiving prescriptions for opiates and benzodiazepine sedatives at the same time dropped 8 percent.

**Maximizing Use of OARRS Is Key to Future Progress:** While Ohio is seeing record use of OARRS, it is cumbersome for prescribers and pharmacists to switch from their computer system to OARRS to check past opiate history. That is why Ohio Governor John Kasich will invest up to \$1.5 million a year to integrate OARRS directly into electronic medical records and pharmacy dispensing systems so prescribers and dispensers can automatically check past opiate history within the same system they use day-to-day.

- **Kroger Becomes Early Adopter in Ohio's Effort:** Earlier this year, Kroger integrated the OARRS system into their pharmacy computer platform, providing an instant check prior to a patient receiving any controlled substance

prescription at their 226 Ohio stores. As a result, Kroger pharmacists increased their use of OARRS from 10 percent to 100 percent. This partnership was made possible with grant funding provided by the State Board of Pharmacy.

- Ohio Becomes First State in Nation to Offer Statewide Integration: Ohio will continue as a leader in the fight against opiate abuse by being the first state to provide integration of its prescription monitoring program directly into the most commonly used electronic medical record and pharmacy dispensing system in the state. As a result, OARRS will become more user-friendly and one of the most widely utilized prescription monitoring programs in the country.
- Ohio is Ready to Go: With the contract for this service already in place, now is the time for hospitals, prescriber offices and pharmacies to begin work with their software vendors to take advantage of this important investment so they can realize full integration. To learn more, the Board of Pharmacy has set up a special website for these stakeholders: [www.pharmacy.ohio.gov/integration](http://www.pharmacy.ohio.gov/integration).

**BOTTOM LINE:** By helping more prescribers and pharmacists get instant access to the state's prescription drug monitoring program, health care professionals can quickly intervene when they see warning signs of opiate addiction in order to get Ohioans the help they need and prevent drug overdose deaths. While this will strengthen our fight against opiate abuse, there is more work to do and Ohio must continue to look for new ways to make progress in overcoming this epidemic.

