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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
March 30, 2017

The Unified Virginia Chiropractic Association Addresses the Opioids Crisis

Afton, VA – The Opioids Crisis Task Force of the Unified Virginia Chiropractic Association (UVCA) has released a position statement and information resources to assist the public and the health care profession in addressing the opioid epidemic in Virginia and across the country.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nearly 2 million Americans abused or were dependent on prescription opioids in 2014. The Virginia Department of Health reports that the state saw 822 opioid overdose deaths in the first nine months of 2016, compared with 811 in all of 2015.

Per the statement, “The UVCA realizes that there are many causes for acute and chronic pain and that the ‘opioid crisis’ is a complex, multifaceted epidemic.” It further acknowledges that because the factors surrounding prescription opioid overuse and abuse are often complicated and complex – and reach far beyond a mechanical, physical pain -- there is not a blanket solution to this epidemic.

To provide patients, Unified VCA member doctors and other healthcare providers with a reliable clearinghouse of information on the subject, the UVCA has created a web-based reference page at <http://www.virginiachiropractic.org/?page=TheOpioidsCrisis>. It includes the complete position statement, videos to increase the public’s awareness and understanding of the problem, current research demonstrating the vital role that Chiropractic can play in easing the crisis, tool kits to help Doctors of Chiropractic work with their patients and community, and more. These materials will continue to be refined and expanded.

For acute, subacute musculoskeletal and chronic non-cancer pain (CNCP) syndromes, the UVCA supports a non-pharmacological, or conservative, approach as a first-line therapy for patients – consistent with recommendations included in the CDC’s Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain released in March 2016.

The research shows that Doctors of Chiropractic are effective providers of the “multimodal and multidisciplinary” care recommended by the CDC. Chiropractors can effectively and efficiently manage a great percentage of these cases to reasonable resolution for the patient. With low-risk outcomes and an opportunity for the patient to live with less pain, the UVCA is committed to educating the public and fellow healthcare providers to strongly consider utilization of chiropractic as a viable option.

The CDC’s recommendation is that “multimodal and multidisciplinary therapies (therapies that combine exercise and related therapies with psychologically based approaches) can help reduce pain and improve function more effectively than single modalities.” The CDC is urging health care providers to reduce the use of opioids in favor of safe alternatives.

The UVCA applauds the Virginia Board of Medicine for recently developing and approving new emergency regulations that will give it authority to specifically regulate the prescribing of opioids for pain. For the first time, the regulations apply specific guidelines to Virginia providers, dictating how many opioids can be prescribed depending on the situation and stipulating that other pain treatments should be considered before opioids are prescribed. Further, conservative care like chiropractic is included as part of the continuum of care options for acute and chronic pain. The UVCA looks forward to working with physicians and other healthcare providers to address this public health emergency in safe, cost-effective, and highly impactful

ways.

The push for the Board of Medicine to adopt new regulations came from several sides, including Governor Terry McAuliffe and Secretary of Health and Human Resources Bill Hazel, who requested that the board consider the issue, and the state's commissioner of health, Marissa Levine, who declared the public health emergency in November of 2016. UVCA President Dr. David Dolberg created the task force last year, appointing District Director Dr. A.J. LaBarbera as chair.

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