March 26, 2018

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chair, House Committee on
Energy and Commerce
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Ranking Member, House Committee on
Energy and Commerce
2322A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Walden and Ranking Member Pallone:

On behalf of our 161,000 dentist members, we are writing to share with you our new policy on opioids supporting mandates on prescription limits and continuing education in what could be the first of its kind among major healthcare professional organizations. The policy states:

- The ADA supports mandatory continuing education in prescribing opioids and other controlled substances.
- The ADA supports statutory limits on opioid dosage and duration of no more than seven days for the treatment of acute pain, consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) evidence-based guidelines.
- The ADA supports dentists registering with and utilizing Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs) to promote the appropriate use of opioids and deter misuse and abuse.

As you know, in 2016, opioids (including prescription opioids, heroin and fentanyl) killed more than 42,000 people—more than any year on record—and 40 percent of those deaths involved a prescription pain reliever, according to the CDC. This doesn't count the 1.8 million Americans (including 152,000 teenagers) who reported abusing or being dependent on prescription pain relievers, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Most opioids prescribed to patients in the U.S. are written by physicians and other medical professionals for management of chronic (long-term) pain. Dentists with an appropriate license may also prescribe opioids, and do so most often for management of acute (short-term) pain such as severe tooth decay, extraction of teeth and root canals. In 1998, dentists were the top specialty prescribers of opioid pain relievers, accounting for 15.5 percent of all opioid prescriptions in the U.S. By 2012, this number had fallen to 6.4 percent.

Since 2012, the ADA has offered free continuing education webinars on safe and effective opioid prescribing for dental pain. The ADA-produced webinars are free, convenient to access and tailored to pain management in dentistry. Additionally, participants are eligible for one hour of continuing education credit for each webinar completed.

The ADA also produced a clinical reference manual with techniques for managing dental pain for those who may be at risk for substance dependence. It covers the complexities of modern pain management in dentistry, including the nature of drug addiction, ways to screen patients for potential substance use disorders, and techniques for motivating at-risk individuals to seek appropriate treatment.

Additionally, the ADA has raised awareness about the misuse and abuse of opioid analgesics by partnering with many organizations, including the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids, the SAMHSA, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and the United States Surgeon General. We are now working with Congress to expand funding for the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act and urging federal agencies to tailor their prescriber education and outreach.

The ADA is committed to alleviating the scourge of opioid abuse that has been devastating our communities. Working together with other healthcare professionals, policy makers and the public, the ADA believes it is possible to end this devastating and preventable public health crisis.

We applaud the Energy and Commerce Committee's efforts on combating the opioid crisis. We look forward to working with the Committee and members of Congress on legislation to address this national public health crisis.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Natalie Hales at 202-898-2404 or halesn@ada.org. Information is also available at ADA.org/opioids.

Sincerely,

/s/   /s/

Joseph P. Crowley, D.D.S.   Kathleen T. O'Loughlin, D.M.D., M.P.H.
President   Executive Director

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