



Terry Fulmer, President of The John A. Hartford Foundation, on the opioid epidemic and the need for better pain management for older adults

August 26, 2016 (*New York, NY*) – Reflecting on both the growing epidemic of opioid addiction and many older adults' need to manage chronic pain, Terry Fulmer, PhD, RN, FAAN, president of The John A. Hartford Foundation and a researcher and authority on the care of older people, offers the following statement:

“The growing toll of opioid abuse has prompted widespread discussion and needed action from federal and state authorities, along with health systems and clinicians. However, as we confront this epidemic, we must also consider the health and well-being of the more than 20 million older adults who suffer every day with chronic pain.

“Concerns about opioid addiction among people 65+ are warranted, but so are concerns about the rampant undertreatment of pain among this population, many of whom suffer from high rates of degenerative arthritis, disabling nerve pain, and cancers. Tightened restrictions on painkillers may present difficulties for the 30 percent of Medicare patients who filled an opioid prescription last year.

“The national opioid crisis requires actions at all levels. We must deal with the devastating impact of addiction and abuse **and** find new ways to help older adults manage their pain safely. We need action that includes:

- Further development, testing, and prescription of pharmaceutical **and** particularly non-pharmaceutical alternatives (e.g., exercise, meditation, Tai Chi/yoga, and meditation, among others) to opioids;
- Clinical support necessary to help older people take on and manage drug and non-drug options for their pain; and
- A commitment to more research into opioid use and its efficacy for chronic pain management.

“For older people already addicted to opioids, we also need to create greater access to treatment services and social supports that can help them break their addictions and find new ways to take control of their pain and their lives. Together we can both stem the opioid epidemic and ensure that older adults get the pain management they so desperately need.”

For more thoughts from Dr. Fulmer on older adults, pain management, and opioids, please visit her [Huffington Post blog on the subject](#).

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About Terry Fulmer, PhD, RN, FAAN

Dr. Fulmer is the President of The John A. Hartford Foundation, a private, nonpartisan philanthropy based in New York City and dedicated to improving the care of older adults. She is nationally and internationally recognized as a leading expert in geriatrics and is best known for her research on the topic of elder abuse and neglect, which has been funded by the National Institute on Aging and the National Institute for Nursing Research. She is an elected member of the National Academy of Medicine (formerly the Institute of Medicine). To learn more about President Fulmer, please visit www.jhartfound.org/about/staff/terry-fulmer. To learn more about The John A. Hartford Foundation, please visit www.jhartfound.org.

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