



## Breakfast Seminars – 2018

### BS5 The Making of an Opioid Crisis in America? Why Research, Policy, and Practice Matter

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After attending this presentation, attendees will be able to analyze and discuss the features and characteristics of the opioid crisis in the United States. Attendees will also be able to summarize successful implementation of policies and practices at the federal, state, and local levels.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing an open forum for forensic practitioners of many disciplines to discuss the impacts of the opioid crisis to the criminal justice system and how improved reporting, surveillance, research, analytical testing, technology, and policy can help mitigate the challenges of use and misuse of these drugs.

Nearly three million Americans reported a substance use disorder to prescription pain relievers or heroin in 2015, fueling a steady increase in fatalities to an estimated 91 United States deaths daily. These rates are not slowing. In fact, alarming increases in 2015 also resulted in drug overdoses becoming the leading cause of accidental death in the United States, with more than half attributed to heroin and prescription pain relievers (33,091 of 52,404 total drug overdoses).<sup>1</sup> Effective strategies begin with understanding the factors that drive the interrelated problems our nation faces with the ever-increasing opioid crisis in public health and the criminal justice system.

Law enforcement, medical professionals, laboratories, and legal agencies are battling with unmanageable caseloads, economic shortfalls, and challenges for safety, analytical preparedness, and basic education and training. Confronted with the fast-paced emerging drug life cycles, reliable surveillance and intelligence are needed more than they have ever been. The legislative quagmire is just as burdensome, as policy change cannot happen without the data to support change.

This breakfast seminar is an ongoing effort of the National Institute of Justice's Forensic Technology Center for Excellence and the American Academy of Forensic Sciences Synthetic Opioids Ad Hoc Committee to heighten awareness in our communities and encourage working together to bring about necessary research and positive changes to policy and practice. This seminar will offer a multifaceted perspective to the manner in which diverse criminal justice disciplines are addressing these challenges, sharing their knowledge, and advancing science, technology, and law. Dealing with the impacts of the opioid crisis to the criminal justice system requires better reporting, surveillance, research, technology, and policy than are currently in use. This type of forum is the kind of effective public safety strategies identified by the National Governors Association to reduce the illicit supply of and demand for opioids by implementing best practices and ensuring inter-governmental cooperation in criminal and death investigations as well as establishing and enhancing stakeholder coalitions.<sup>2</sup> The need to understand the epidemic and its effects goes beyond knowing your own profession — it takes a global perspective to fully act and make a difference.

#### Reference(s):

1. Rudd R.A., Seth P., David F., Scholl L. Increases in Drug and Opioid-Involved Overdose Deaths — United States, 2010–2015. *Morb Mortal Wkly Rep (MMWR)* 2016;65:1445–1452. DOI:<http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm65051e1>.
2. National Governors Association. *Finding Solutions to the Prescription Opioid and Heroin Crisis: A Road Map of States*. 2016. <https://www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/2016/1607NGAOpioidRoadMap.pdf>.

#### Opioids, Policy, Practice