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Representative Smola supports launching of new state prescription monitoring system to address opioid crisis

BOSTON – Representative Todd M. Smola (R-Warren, Ranking Member, Committee on Ways & Means), says the launching of a new online state database will enhance doctors’ and pharmacists’ ability to track the prescribing of opioids and other controlled substances to patients in Massachusetts.

Beginning October 15, all prescribers will be required to check the Massachusetts Prescription Awareness Tool (MassPAT) every time they prescribe a Schedule II or Schedule III narcotic. This mandate was included as part of the comprehensive opioid abuse prevention bill that was signed into law on March 14.

The new tracking system, which replaces the Prescription Monitoring Program established in 1992, was created following a recommendation by Governor Baker’s Opioid Working Group that the state develop a more efficient and user-friendly online system.

“Massachusetts is facing an unprecedented opioid crisis that has already claimed far too many victims,” said Representative Smola. “MassPAT is an important tool that will help save lives by curbing drug abuse and preventing people from ‘doctor-shopping’ to fill multiple prescriptions.”

According to the Department of Public Health (DPH), MassPAT will offer faster access to data and reports. In addition to being compatible with the electronic medical record systems used by health providers, MassPAT will allow pharmacists and prescribers to access other states’ online databases to provide further safeguards against overprescribing.

Licensed prescribers and pharmacists can access the online database to obtain a patient's history of Schedule II through V prescriptions from the previous 12 months, including prescriptions filled by all Massachusetts pharmacies and out-of-state pharmacies that deliver to Massachusetts. According to DPH, approximately 200,000 prescriptions per week (or 13 million per year) are tracked through the state's program.

DPH reported 1,531 accidental opioid overdose deaths in Massachusetts in 2015, an 18% increase over the 1,294 confirmed deaths in 2014. DPH estimates the actual number of opioid deaths for 2015 could increase to 1,659 once all cases pending before the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner are finalized.

An average of four people die from an opioid overdose every single day in Massachusetts, with DPH reporting that 3 out of every 4 communities in the Commonwealth experienced at least one opioid-related overdose death between 2012 and 2014.

For additional information please contact Representative Smola at Todd.Smola@mahouse.gov or (617)722-2100.

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