West Virginia has the highest rate of prescription drug and heroin overdose deaths in the nation, and that rate has quadrupled in the last decade. We have a dire need — for comprehensive, leading-edge patient care, for robust prevention and recovery services, for a new generation of highly trained healthcare professionals across the state and for research and outreach with the power to change lives for the better.

West Virginians deserve a healthier future. And West Virginia University is stepping up to help answer that call by directing its top research, clinical care and outreach leaders to organize resources against prescription medicine abuse and heroin addiction.
Telepsychiatry Addiction Services
Since 2011, WVU Medicine has been expanding the COAT program into rural areas of the state. Through advances in technology, those experiencing addiction can connect with experts at WVU online and receive comprehensive treatment. As of January 2016 the program reaches McDowell and Mercer counties through the Southern Highlands Mental Health Center and Cabin Creek Health Center.

Comprehensive Opioid Addiction Treatment (COAT)
Headed by Carl “Rolly” Sullivan, MD, director of the addictions program at WVU Medicine Chestnut Ridge Center and professor of behavioral medicine and psychiatry, this is WVU's largest comprehensive treatment effort and includes both on-campus and statewide patients undergoing outpatient, group-based, individually tailored programs combining medication and therapy.

Since 2005 more than 2,000 patients have been treated successfully.

Drug-Free Moms and Babies Project
Part of SBIRT, this project integrates screening, brief intervention and treatment services into maternity care clinics as well as two years of recovery coaching for mothers struggling with addiction.

Screening, Brief Intervention and Treatment (SBIRT)
In 2014, WVU Medicine has tested an innovative approach to reducing the misuse of drugs and alcohol in its trauma center — screening trauma patients for drugs and alcohol and providing brief interventions and referrals to those who test positive.

1,891 candidates were screened.

599 tested positive for alcohol and

696 tested positive for drugs.

1 in 5 BABIES in West Virginia is born addicted to prescription pills.

EMPOWERING OUR ALLIES.
We’re giving people and communities the knowledge and resources to stem this tide. Through a range of initiatives and long-standing partnerships, we’re engaging and empowering West Virginians to take steps to improve the health of their own communities.

West Virginia has the highest drug overdose rates in the nation among 12- to 25-year olds.

The WVU Collegiate Recovery Program
WVU is launching a new program to support students seeking help recovering from addiction. The group seeks to establish a community at the University for those both supporting and seeking a culture of recovery and academic success.

Rational Drug Therapy Program (RDT)
RDT is part of the West Virginia University School of Pharmacy’s Department of Pharmaceutical Systems and Policy and supported through a contract with the West Virginia Bureau for Medical Services (WVBMS). This program reviews not only the medications listed on the West Virginia Medicaid and PEIA preferred drug list but also performs clinical prior authorization reviews for certain classes of drugs including home health products and injectable medications.

WVU School of Pharmacy’s Introductory Pharmacy Practice Experience (IPPE)
Second-year students at the West Virginia University School of Pharmacy are educating middle- and high school students in West Virginia and Pennsylvania about the dangers of substance and prescription drug abuse one school at a time. The goal is to not only share information in order to prevent drug abuse and promote healthy life choices, but to show that addiction is a real disease and can affect every aspect of life — physical, social, psychological and emotional — in dramatic ways.

Law Enforcement Naloxone Program
Prescription opioid overdoses have skyrocketed in just a few years in the state, outpacing motor vehicle crash deaths by 2010 and tearing apart families across West Virginia. Naloxone, a medication that counteracts the effects of opiate and opioid overdose, could be the key to reversing this deadly trend. WVU is working with police agencies to distribute this life-saving drug to first responders so that they can provide immediate assistance in case of overdose.

1 in 5 BABIES in West Virginia is born addicted to prescription pills.

We’re caring for addicted persons — and reforming pain care to reduce further abuse. We’re treating people on campus and across the state with the latest telemedicine technology. And we’re helping to stem the tide of addiction through screening, intervention and treatment at the earliest stages of potential drug or alcohol abuse.
Part of WVU’s historic, land-grant mission has always been creating an educational environment that encourages students to stay in the state after graduation and benefit it and its people. No curricula have more potential for impact on the prescription drug epidemic than those in the health sciences.

17 West Virginia counties have a shortage of primary care providers.

28 West Virginia counties have a shortage of mental health providers.

66% of WVU Health Sciences’ 3,106 students are West Virginians.

1. WVU Health Sciences research expenditures total $59,501,593.

2. WVU and Marshall have each committed $750,000 toward collaborative programs aimed at finding solutions to West Virginia health issues.

REAL RESEARCH. FOR REAL SOLUTIONS.

WVU has heard the call for groundbreaking treatments and holistic solutions to opioid addiction — and we’re answering it in the lab and on the hospital floor.

School of Medicine
Curriculum Components

At WVU first- and second-year medical students are exposed to courses that specifically address identifying patients at risk of addiction and how to refer these patients to treatment. Residents receive even more in-depth addiction training, while fellowships provide psychiatry education with further emphasis on substance abuse treatment.

Practice-Based Research Network

Through the Practice-Based Research Network, WVU researchers work with primary care physicians, nurses and other health professionals throughout the state to study how best to implement substance abuse prevention and treatment programs in community settings. Widespread heroin addiction, the subsequent rise in hepatitis C through shared needle use and rural residents’ inability to access specialists are of particular concern.