

## Floridians can overcome the opioid epidemic together | Opinion

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Alexis Pleus of Truth Pharm demonstrates how to administer Narcan to save a person from dying of a heroin, opioid overdose. Kate Collins / Staff video



(Photo: Special to the Democrat)

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Florida State's campus has quieted after graduation, and it seems like summer is already here. While thoughts turn to outdoor pursuits and vacation, last week was also National Prevention Week. It's time to raise awareness about the importance of substance abuse prevention and positive mental health, and

Florida State University is demonstrating how we can rally forces on a particularly serious issue – [the opioid crisis](#).

The state of Florida has recognized the urgency of this problem with \$65 million in funding to fight the epidemic, and our colleges and universities are all on board to do our part. Our campuses are not immune — in fact, about one in 10 undergraduates misuse prescription painkillers, according to a survey by The Ohio State University. It is a real problem we must address, and fast.

That's why we're eager to partner with Allied Against Opioid Abuse. This national organization was formed to further a collaborative, community-based approach to preventing prescription opioid misuse and abuse. Three FSU colleges — Social Work, Medicine, and Nursing — partnered with Allied Against Opioid Abuse to present a prevention panel discussion on May 18, bringing together many perspectives on this issue, including youth and elder advocates, the medical profession, law enforcement and others. The goal was to share ideas and learn more about how we can work

together to help prevent the misuse and abuse of opioids before it begins.

Among the most positive results from the event was the realization by participants of the power of community groups to help students, clients and residents become better healthcare consumers. For instance, by working together to spread knowledge and educational resources, we can ensure that patients — including college-aged adults — know the rights, risks and responsibilities associated with opioid use.

Patients have the right to get the information they need to make an informed decision about whether prescription opioids are right for them. That includes a discussion with health care providers about the risks of these medicines, and alternative, non-pharmacological treatment options. We also discussed our collective responsibilities — many attendees were shocked to learn that approximately 60 percent of Americans who misused prescription opioids obtain them not from a drug dealer, but from a friend or relative, for free.

There may come a day when we find ourselves needing an opioid pain reliever, whether we're a student-athlete injured on the field, or a grandparent suffering from cancer pain. Should such medicine be prescribed to us, we all have a responsibility to protect others by vowing to take the medication as directed, to store it safely in a locked cabinet, and to promptly dispose of any unused pills when no longer needed.

These individual actions are powerful, but collaborative effort will multiply our impact. To learn more, access resources to share within your community — at your school, in your workplace or among family — and to find disposal locations across Florida, visit [AgainstOpioidAbuse.org](http://AgainstOpioidAbuse.org).

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