



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# News Release

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"Prescribed to Death" opioid memorial raises awareness of prescription drug crisis

YouTube video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h0fZ5zoVIP0&feature=youtu.be>

VAntage Point blog link:

<https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/47513/prescribed-to-death-opioid-memorial-raises-awareness-of-prescription-drug-crisis>

*On April 17, VA Acting Secretary Robert Wilkie visited the National Safety Council's "Prescribed to Death" opioid memorial and recorded this video message*

I'm Robert Wilkie. I'm visiting the National Safety Council's "Prescribed to Death" opioid memorial. The memorial is currently located here at the White House. It's part of President Trump's Initiative to Stop Opioid Abuse and Reduce Drug Supply and Demand.

Inside, 22,000 faces are engraved on small, white pills. Each symbolizes the tragic story of an American lost to prescription opioid overdose.

Some are Veterans...Veterans who defended this nation with courage and honor.

Many Veterans have survived serious battlefield wounds. And some endure pain for months, for years, and even for the rest of their lives. In fact, nearly 60 percent who served in the Middle East, and more than 50 percent of older Veterans, live with some form of chronic pain. And we have to provide them – and all Americans – safe, effective pain management that lets them live fulfilling lives.

For more than a decade now, the Department of Veterans Affairs has been doing just that.

- In just the last four years, we've reduced opioid use by over 41 percent among Veterans we serve.
- We've established evidence-based, collaborative approaches – ways to manage pain more safely and effectively, while minimizing reliance on opioids.
- We're improving the effectiveness of our pain management teams and expanding treatment options at every facility.
- We're coordinating with community care providers to ensure prescriptions are managed as safely as possible.
- We've issued the lifesaving drug Naloxone to over 100,000 Veterans to help prevent tragedies.
- Our Opioid Therapy Risk Report provides detailed information on risk factors and helps clinicians design effective pain management treatment plans.
- And we're bringing the power of big-data analytics to bear, as well.

VA's Stratification Tool for Opioid Risk Mitigation – STORM, for short – puts predictive analytics in the hands of providers. STORM estimates overdose or suicide risk among Veterans using or considering opioid therapy. And it offers risk-reduction interventions and non-opioid options. VA clinicians are giving extra attention to Veterans at risk of tragic outcomes.

Treating pain is complex. But as President Trump said, "We can be the generation that ends the opioid epidemic."

He's right. And VA's helping lead the way.

Thank you, and God bless our Veterans and service members.

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