



Faculty, Community Take on Opioid Addiction Crisis

BOCA RATON (Feb. 3, 2018) — Researchers from multiple colleges are helping to combat a rising opioids addiction epidemic, and recently convened a symposium on the Boca Raton campus that brought together faculty and lawmakers to examine government policies and university-wide faculty research on the addiction crisis in Palm Beach County.

Palm Beach County's State Attorney Dave Aronberg, Deputy Assistant State Attorney Alan Johnson and Andrew Burki, the CEO of Life of Purpose, gave remarks at the recent Addiction Research Collaborative meeting hosted by the Division of Research.



Palm Beach County led the state in drug-related deaths in 2015, and in 2016, there were more drug overdoses than car crashes, Aronberg said. The current epidemic foreshadows what is to come.

Despite efforts to limit prescriptions or invest in treatment, the rate of opioid overdose deaths may not peak until 2020, said Janet Robishaw, Ph.D., chair of the Department of Biomedical Science. With the support of a \$4 million grant from the National Institutes of Health, Robishaw and her team are working on genetic testing that will help doctors identify patients who are more susceptible to becoming addicted to opioid medications. This will allow doctors to focus on alternative treatments for these patients.

Another faculty member, Lawrence Toll, Ph.D., a professor in the College of Medicine and an investigator with the FAU Brain Institute, discussed his research on the management of pain and drug addiction by targeting specific opioid receptors in the brain.

On April 7, the School of Social Work and the Delray Beach Drug Task Force are hosting a day-long substance use disorder event engaging faculty and community.

"We think our research will have an impact on what's happening here in the community," said Karin Scarpinato, Ph.D., the associate vice president of research.