

NYU Langone center to take multidisciplinary approach to fighting opioid crisis

NYU Langone Health has opened the Center for Opioid Epidemiology and Policy to aid in addressing the ongoing opioid epidemic and its impact on the health of families and communities.

The center is receiving funding from NYU Langone, as well as annual grant funding from the National Institutes of Health of approximately \$1.6 million per year. Magdalena Cerdá, associate professor in the Department of Population Health, is leading the facility, which will take a multidisciplinary approach to fighting the crisis.

Epidemiologists, physicians and health economists, as well as biostatisticians, lawyers and policymakers, will be involved. "The only way to really tackle such a complex problem is to look at it from multiple perspectives," Cerdá said.

Specifically, experts from different disciplines will try to answer questions about what the emerging trends are when it comes to opioid-use disorder, why certain groups are more vulnerable and what the effects of varying policies are, she said.

And they'll focus on four main efforts to do so: building a data repository of state and local policies and health outcomes associated with opioid-use disorder; using data and analytics to track the evolution of the epidemic and future hot spots of overdoses; evaluating the impact of drug policies and social conditions on opioid-use disorder; and studying the effects of community spikes in opioid misuse on the health of local populations and ways to guard against such adverse outcomes.

"We're also trying to push research a little further by trying to figure out what combination of things needs to be in place at the state- and local-community level in order for people to benefit most," Cerdá said.

In the lead-up to the center's launch, Cerdá and her team of investigators published findings in *JAMA Network Open* that showed that increased marketing of opioids to physicians is associated with higher opioid prescribing rates and elevated overdose deaths in many counties across the nation.

At the center's inaugural symposium Monday, Dr. Wilson Compton, deputy director at the National Institute on Drug Abuse of the National Institutes of Health, acknowledged the importance of a multidisciplinary approach.

"This center will be a phenomenal national resource to address these issues here in New York and across the country," Compton said. The most recent data from NIDA shows that more than 130 people die every day from opioid overdoses in the U.S.

In addition to grants already awarded from NIDA, Cerdá said, the hope long-term is for the center's work to be supported by more NIH grants as well as those from private foundations and other institutes.

"I hope that a center like this can really be a convening point to produce evidence-based research on what the causes, consequences and ways to address the opioid epidemic are," she said.