

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON  
PALLIATIVE CARE AND QUALITY OF LIFE  
February 10, 2023**

Alabama Department of Public Health (ADPH)  
The RSA Tower, Suite 1586  
Montgomery, Alabama  
Virtual Meeting

**Members Present**

Kristi A. Acker, D.N.P., Chair  
Karen Marlowe, Pharm.D., Co-Chair  
Gregory W. Ayers, M.D.  
Leigh Ann Matthews, M.S.N.  
Richard J. Brockman, J.D.  
Sarah Pederson, Ph.D.  
Stormy Dismuke, M.S.N.  
Annie Hinson, L.B.S.W.  
Mary Ann Somers, M.A.Ed.  
John G. Beard, M.B.A.

**Members Absent**

Timothy Mayhall, M.Div.

**ADPH Staff Present**

Scott Harris, M.D., M.P.H., State Health Officer  
Karen M. Landers, M.D., F.A.A.P., Chief Medical Officer  
Brian Hale, General Counsel  
Jacqueline D. Milledge, Director, Bureau of Health Provider Standards (BHPS)  
Kierra Montgomery, Office Manager, BHPS

**Guests Present**

Monika Wedgeworth, Ed.D., R.N., C.N.E., Associate Professor, University of Alabama,  
Capstone College of Nursing  
Mercy Mumba, Ph.D., R.N., Associate Professor, University of Alabama, Capstone College of  
Nursing  
Rosemary Blackmon, Alabama Hospital Association (AlaHA)  
Carol Snowden, (AlaHA)

**CONSIDERATION OF THE MINUTES OF AUGUST 12, 2022:**

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Minutes of August 12, 2022, as distributed; the motion carried unanimously.

**ALABAMA OPIOID OVERDOSE AND ADDICTION COUNCIL:**

Monika Wedgeworth stated that Governor Kay Ivy had created the Alabama Opioid Overdose and Addiction Council in 2017, with three co-chairs; the Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Mental Health, the State Health Officer of the Alabama Department of Public Health, and the State Attorney General. The five goals of the council were prevention, intervention, treatment, community response, and workforce. The subcommittees were data, prescriber-dispenser, rescue (Naloxone), treatment-recovery, community engagement-veterans, prevention-education, law enforcement, and workforce.

The Prescriber-Dispenser Subcommittee developed the Alabama Health Professionals Opioid and Pain Management Education (ALAHOPE) to develop a standardized curriculum around opioids for all healthcare professionals around the state. On Monday, February 13, 2023, the subcommittee will launch the website, which will allow people to view the curriculum for the first time.

**ALAHA COMMUNITY COALITION UPDATES:**

Carol Snowden shared information on the Advanced Directive Toolkit, which was developed by the AlaHA workgroup to share with communities. AlaHA has nine community coalitions across the state. The goal of the coalitions is to improve patient outcomes in local community settings. The toolkit is expected to help with transitions of care. This toolkit can be accessed on the AlaHA website at [alaha.org/advanced-directive-toolkit/](http://alaha.org/advanced-directive-toolkit/). Dr. Kristi Acker suggested putting the toolkit on the ADPH Palliative Care webpage so that the public could easily access the information.

**COVID-19 UPDATE:**

Dr. Landers advised that there are still COVID-19 cases in Alabama. She commented that even though we are not able to accurately keep up with the number of COVID-19 cases due to home tests, reports show that Alabama still has a high community transmission. The vaccines continue to reduce hospitalizations and deaths. Reports also show that there are a

reasonable amount of hospital beds available. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is removing Evusheld as a monoclonal antibody. Paxlovid will remain available. The Department of Health and Human Services has announced changes that will occur when the Public Health Emergency ends on May 11, 2023. Dr. Landers commented that one of the most important things is to make sure that vaccines and therapeutics remain available.

Dr. Landers announced that Dr. Amber Clark-Brown would be joining ADPH on February 16, 2023, as the Medical Officer for the Bureaus of Health Provider Standards and Home and Community Services, and would work with the Office of Health Equity.

**OPIOID PRESCRIBING AND REGULATIONS UPDATES:**

Dr. Ayers noted that the CDC had issued updated guidelines in November 2022. The updated guidelines remove generic thresholds for dose and quantity recommendations and separates acute and chronic pain within the guidelines. It was recommended that patient care be individualized to cover individualized prescription management for patients. They also reiterated that the recommendations do not apply to pain management that is a result of sickle cell disease, cancer, or patients receiving palliative or end-of-life care.

**LEGISLATIVE UPDATE:**

Dr. Harris provided a legislative update. He said that they are waiting to see if more people are interested in why there is so much resistance in regard to citizens receiving immunizations and not just COVID-19 vaccines, but with all vaccines. We now have lower rates of childhood vaccinations than we have had in many years. People who have always prioritized vaccinating their children are suddenly skeptical of MMR and DPT for their younger children even though all of their older children were vaccinated. He is hoping that the Legislature will help with this trend.

Medicaid disenrollment has begun. Some of the affected children will return to enrollment in the Children's Health Insurance Program; other children will lose access to health care.

With the end of the Public Health Emergency, the federal government will no longer buy vaccines or therapeutics; therefore, they will be commercialized completely.

**CENTER FOR SUBSTANCE USE RESEARCH AND RELATED CONDITIONS:**

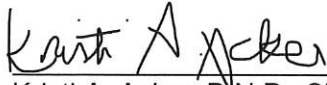
Dr. Mumba advised that the mission of the Center for Substance Abuse Research was to provide a centralized location for substance abuse research, which would promote outcomes for people who are recovering, and to prevent substance abuse disorders within the communities. They have a group of scientists looking at developing medication to help people in recovery as well as micronutrients that may be helpful with reducing inflammation and other negative health outcomes for people who have opioid use disorders. They have other scientists who look at the changes in the brain and how some psychosocial intervention can change some of the neurobiological pathways to help those in recovery. Some of the other programs they are looking into relate to vocational rehabilitation and community reintegration. They have projects to look at how they can help those in the criminal justice system get reincorporated into society and reduce recidivism. Due to the high susceptibility to homelessness for this group of people, they are looking into providing transitional housing through a research grant received from the Appalachian Regional Commission.

**OTHER ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION:**

Dr. Acker inquired about the status of the palliative care report. Ms. Milledge stated that work continues on the template; however, they need additional information as to what the Council would like included in the report. Dr. Harris stated that he and Dr. Landers would get together and look at the information gathered so that it can be circulated among the group. Dr. Acker stated that the report would be great information to include on the ADPH Palliative Care webpage.

**NEXT MEETING DATE:**

The next meeting of the Council is scheduled May 5, 2023, The RSA Tower,  
201 Monroe Street, Board Room 1586, Montgomery, Alabama 36104.



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Kristi A. Acker, D.N.P., Chair  
State Advisory Council on Palliative Care and Quality of Life



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Jacqueline D. Milledge, Director  
Bureau of Health Provider Standards  
Alabama Department of Public Health