



Adopted September 2019

## JOINT POSITION STATEMENT ON THE OPIOID ABUSE EPIDEMIC

The partner organizations, Association of Surgical Technologists, Inc., (AST), Accreditation Review Council on Education in Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (ARC/STSA), Association of Surgical Assistants (ASA), and National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA), recognize that the abuse and addiction to both prescription and illicit opioid drugs has significantly increased in the United States, and has reached such a critical point that in 2017 the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared a public health emergency to address the national opioid crisis. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has reported the following statistics:

- 1999 – 2017
  - 700,000 deaths from drug overdose, of which 200,000 were due to prescription opioids.
- 2016
  - 42,000 deaths due to opioid overdose; 40% involved prescription opioids.
- 2017
  - 70,200 drug overdose deaths; 68% due to opioids.
  - On average, 130 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose.
- Most common opioids involved in overdose deaths are hydrocodone, illicitly-manufactured fentanyl (IMF), methadone, and oxycodone.

As essential members of the surgical team, CSTs and CSFAs are encouraged to be involved in community, state, and national efforts to address the opioid crisis. Research on prescription drug misuse has shown that the two most commonly reported sources of opioids are obtaining the drugs from a friend or relative, and personal prescriptions. Therefore, CSTs and CSFAs, in collaboration with other health care practitioners (HCP), should support efforts to educate family members, patients, and the community at large about the potential health consequences of misusing or sharing prescriptions, including the dangers of addiction and overdose. As part of these educational efforts, CSTs and CSFAs can assist by providing information that increases public awareness about prescription and illicit opioid use, and the methods that can prevent access to personal prescription medications, including proper disposal of remaining drugs.

The partner organizations support CSTs and CSFAs in their completion of continuing education to further their knowledge of the methods to identify individuals and patients who are at a high-risk for opioid addiction, substance use disorder, or an opioid-related adverse drug event, and how to provide assistance to addicted individuals seeking treatment, including referral to addiction treatment professionals and centers of treatment. Additionally, the partner organizations support the CST and CSFA in completion of continuing education to maintain their knowledge of the treatment of individuals who have overdosed outside of a health care facility.

The partner organizations affirm their support of the HHS' five-point strategy in the efforts to prevent opioid abuse and addiction.

- Access: Better Prevention, Treatment, and Recovery Services
- Data: Better Data on the Epidemic
- Pain: Better Pain Management
- Overdoses: Better Targeting of Overdose-Reversing Drugs
- Research: Better Research on Pain and Addiction

Furthermore, the partner organizations affirm their support of patient safety legislation that includes:

- Funding for treatment of opioid addiction.
- Funding of efforts to educate the public on the dangers of opioid use.
- Disposal programs to prevent misuse, illicit distribution, or access of unfinished prescriptions.
- Prescription controls and distribution to only those in need of pain management, such as cancer patients or surgical patients who require postoperative opioid analgesics.

Through the combined efforts of HCPs, government and non-governmental organizations, and the public, the fight to gain control of the opioid crisis with the use of prudent safety measures, establishing legislation, and improving prevention and treatment should contribute to keeping the patient first ensuring that no patient's care will be compromised.