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Thursday, Nov. 2, 2017

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APA COMMENDS MANY RECOMMENDATIONS OF PRESIDENT'S OPIOID COMMISSION

Association calls for more funding, emphasis on non-pharmacological pain interventions

WASHINGTON – The report of President Trump's commission on combating the opioid epidemic sets the stage for an effective national response, but the need for adequate funding remains unaddressed, according to the American Psychological Association.

"We are pleased to see the inclusion of so many vital approaches for tackling this public health crisis, such as researching, identifying and promoting effective treatments, as well as decriminalizing opioid users," said APA CEO Arthur C. Evans Jr. "We look forward to working with the administration to implement many of these recommendations, but Congress needs to fully fund them. Diverting money from other critical health priorities is not the answer. This crisis requires its own dedicated funding streams. We need to quickly get to the point where it is easier for someone struggling with an opioid addiction to access treatment than to get more opioids."

The report includes many other worthwhile suggestions to stem the opioid epidemic, said APA President Antonio E. Puente, PhD, singling out its calls for better enforcement of the mental health parity law, which requires substance use disorders to be covered at the same level as physical disorders by insurance providers, and its recommendation that the Department of Health and Human Services review and modify rate setting to cover the true costs of treatment.

"The commission also recognized the broad scope of health professions that are in need of enhanced training in evidence-based addiction treatment, as well as the role of schools and college campuses in identifying those at risk of developing substance use disorders to ensure that students have access to early intervention and treatment," Puente said.

Evans noted that chronic pain is often best managed through nonpharmacological interventions that lower the risk of opioid use disorders. "The commission has focused on those who prescribe opioids, but responding effectively to this public health crisis will require professionals capable of intervening at every stage of the problem," he said. "Greater emphasis should be placed on prevention through the use of evidence-based psychological interventions for the management of pain."

The American Psychological Association, in Washington, D.C., is the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States. APA's membership includes nearly 115,700 researchers, educators, clinicians, consultants and students. Through its divisions in 54 subfields of psychology and affiliations with 60 state, territorial and Canadian provincial associations, APA works to advance the creation, communication and application of psychological knowledge to benefit society and improve people's lives.
