Recovery Advocates to the FDA: WAKE UP

New campaign demands accountability and action from the Food and Drug Administration on the opioid crisis

WASHINGTON, D.C. – February 25, 2019 – Recovery Reform NOW today launched "Wake Up FDA," a campaign to demand the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) use its full discretion to stop the opioid crisis and support recovery. The campaign is a public condemnation of the FDA for being complicit in the opioid crisis. Though the FDA claims to be dedicated to advancing recovery treatment, they continue to approve new and more dangerous opioid painkillers while shelving innovative recovery medications—all without any transparency or accountability.

"Every day, 130 people are dying from opioid overdose. Enough is enough," said Frank A. Jones, founder of Recovery Reform NOW. "We have to expose the FDA's doublespeak and hold them accountable for the dangerous actions they have taken and the barriers they have erected. It's time for the FDA to put its words into action and prioritize recovery."

In the last six months:

- The FDA approved a form of sufentanil, the most potent opioid on the market, despite criticism and outrage from experts. The decision compelled the Chairman of the FDA's own opioid advisory committee to accuse agency leadership of putting industry interests before public health.
- To the shock of medical experts, the FDA deemed a first-of-its-kind diversion-resistant recovery treatment as safe and effective but subsequently turned around and shelved it for two years without any public justification for keeping it off the market.
- A recent study exposed a seismic failure of post-marketing surveillance and oversight of opioid painkillers, finding that as many as 55% of patients were unnecessarily and inappropriately prescribed fentanyl, an opioid that is contributing significantly to overdose deaths.

"The public deserves to know why and how the FDA makes these outrageous decisions, especially in the middle of a public health emergency. It's flabbergasting," said Ryan Hampton, recovery advocate. "FDA Commissioner Gottlieb may say the right things, but when it comes to actions to support people in recovery and stop the flow of addictive opioids from being unnecessarily prescribed, the FDA Emperor has no clothes. But this is no childhood fable. It's a deadly ruse that must be exposed."

Approving opioids is taking a back seat to recovery and surveillance obligations. A search of the FDA's National Drug Code database revealed that there are eight times more opioid painkillers

available than recovery medications. The campaign is urging Congress assert their authority and demand an explanation. It also calls on the FDA to:

1. Prioritize recovery innovation, including giving survivors access to medications that have already been developed and tested
2. Be a better watchdog on opioids by fixing the surveillance system responsible for monitoring what happens after opioids are approved
3. Be transparent and accountable to the public by telling us who is making decisions and how they are made to ensure that decision makers actually understand MAT and opioid addiction

To learn more about the campaign, tune in to Ryan Hampton's Facebook Live on Wednesday, February 27 at 1pm ET or visit Wake Up FDA campaign website at https://www.wakeupfda.org.

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About Recovery Reform NOW
Recovery Reform NOW is an organization dedicated to advocating and advancing policy reforms for the treatment of substance use disorder, from removing access barriers to the delivery of treatment, to stem the tide of the national addiction epidemic. Learn more about Recovery Reform NOW at https://www.recoveryreformnow.org/.

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