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MEDCHI ENCOURAGES COMPASSION, PREVENTION, AND ACTION FOR INTERNATIONAL OVERDOSE AWARENESS DAY

BALTIMORE – August 26, 2026 – In recognition of **International Overdose Awareness Day** on **August 31**, MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, is joining organizations around the world to honor those whose lives have been lost to overdose, support families and communities affected by substance use disorders, and encourage evidence-based approaches that save lives.

International Overdose Awareness Day is the world's largest annual campaign dedicated to ending overdose, reducing the stigma associated with substance use disorders, and promoting prevention, treatment, and recovery. The observance serves as a reminder that overdose can affect individuals and families from every community and that compassionate, coordinated care is essential to addressing this ongoing public health crisis.

“Every overdose represents a person, a family, and a community forever changed,” said **Dr. Eric Wargotz, President of MedChi**. “International Overdose Awareness Day reminds us that substance use disorder is a medical condition—not a moral failing. As physicians, we are committed to providing compassionate, evidence-based care while working to prevent overdose deaths and expand access to treatment and recovery services.”

Drug overdose remains one of the leading causes of preventable death in the United States. While communities have made progress through increased awareness, expanded treatment options, and wider availability of overdose-reversal medications, continued education and access to care remain critical.

Physicians play a vital role in addressing substance use disorders through early screening, patient education, evidence-based treatment, responsible prescribing practices, and connecting patients with behavioral health and recovery resources. Equally important is reducing the stigma that often prevents individuals from seeking help.

MedChi encourages Maryland residents to:

- Learn to recognize the signs of an overdose and respond quickly by calling 911.
- Keep overdose-reversal medications, such as naloxone, available when appropriate.
- Safely store and properly dispose of prescription medications to reduce the risk of misuse.
- Talk openly with healthcare professionals about concerns related to substance use, mental health, or addiction.
- Support individuals in recovery with compassion and understanding, recognizing that recovery is possible.

Substance use disorders are treatable medical conditions, and early intervention can significantly improve outcomes. Individuals struggling with opioid or other substance use disorders should speak with a physician or other qualified healthcare professional to discuss

treatment options, including medication-assisted treatment, counseling, and recovery support services.

“Recovery is possible, and no one should feel they have to face substance use disorder alone,” Dr. Wargotz added. “By reducing stigma, increasing access to care, and strengthening community support, we can help save lives and offer hope to individuals and families across Maryland.”

This International Overdose Awareness Day, MedChi encourages all Marylanders to remember those lost to overdose, support those in recovery, and work together to build healthier, stronger communities where every individual has access to the care and support they deserve.

About MedChi

MedChi, The Maryland State Medical Society, is a non-profit membership association of Maryland physicians. Formed in 1799, it is still the largest physician organization in Maryland today. The mission of MedChi is to serve as Maryland's foremost advocate and resource for physicians, their patients, and the public health of Maryland. For more information, please visit www.medchi.org.