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Dear Delaware Prescriber:

I am writing to notify you about important new regulations for the safe prescribing of opiates. The new regulations will take effect April 1, 2017.

The United States consumes the vast majority of opiates across the world. According to the Centers for Disease Control, Delaware's prescription rate for certain categories of opiates is among the highest in the nation. The decision to publish new regulations on the use of opiates for acute and chronic pain was reached only after extensive discussion and consideration. These regulations recognize the fact, as reported by many heroin users, that dependence on and abuse of opiates are traceable to an acute procedure or injury for which opiates were prescribed. Evolving recognition that opiates should perhaps not be the first treatment of choice, combined with our state's growing rate of unintended overdoses, weighed heavily on this decision.

New regulations for the safe prescribing of opiates were published in the January 1, 2017 issue of the *Delaware Register of Regulations* and will take effect April 1, 2017. The new regulations are the end result of a formal rule-making process conducted over the past 18 months. During this process, we considered input and testimony from many stakeholder groups regarding the evolving best practices in this arena.

Although they won't solve Delaware's prescription drug problems on their own, the new regulations are needed. They:

- establish basic standards for prescribing opiates safely
- give new requirements on prescribing opiates for acute episodes as well as for chronic, long term pain management

For a detailed overview, please see the following materials:

- *Delaware Prescription Opioid Guidelines for Health Care Providers* at <http://tinyurl.com/providerfacts>
- *Delaware Prescription Opioid Guidelines for Patients* at <http://tinyurl.com/patientfacts>

The full text of the regulations is available online at <http://tinyurl.com/opioidreqs>. To find the changes, look for the underscores and strikeouts.

In addition, a new "Help is Here" website is being developed at www.helpisherede.com. The site has a Medical Providers portal for prescribers. It will house educational materials, sample forms, a link to the Delaware Prescription Monitoring Program, and information that you can use with your patients. If you would like a list of substance abuse detox and treatment providers, follow the "I am here for me" tab on the Help is Here website, which has agency name, location, type, and contact information of local providers.

I greatly appreciate your involvement in the effort to address this most serious threat to the health and safety of Delawareans.

Best regards,

Geoffrey Christ, R.Ph., J.D.
Director