

Dr. James Choo (owner and medical director of Pain Consultants of East TN) speaker at Science Forum at UT on 11/30/2018

Opioid crisis: hallmark of deeper societal problems that are ignored (so discussed pain, suicide, and trauma)

Main takeaways:

- Need to change the language: it started as a prescription drug epidemic \implies opioid crisis \implies polysubstance abuse crisis (not just an opioid problem, it's a drug problem) \implies trauma crisis (get away from stigma about pain and addiction and realize how closely linked to childhood trauma from ACE scores)
- General physicians are sending individuals to pain consultants because they don't want to deal with the problem anymore (there is a long wait for seeing a pain consultant, have seen increase in suicides)
- Suicides have increased with pain clinic closures, rules, regulations since instills fear in individuals who take opioids
- Some use Narcan multiple times in a week because they use it as a safety net and push their high up further

Pain:

- Brain final organ that holds pain/houses anxiety and depression
- 600 billion dollar problem from medical expenses and lost wages
- Number 1 reason to access healthcare is pain
- How pain is treated is an issue of education; very few physicians/providers go to chronic pain lectures
- Fewer opioids, but more deaths from heroin and fentanyl analogs
- East TN problematic from intersection of I-40 and I-75, drug route down from Detroit
- Legislation, closure of pain clinics, education, and insurance company changes
- People dying from polysubstance abuse (Narcan, suboxone, muscle relaxers, alcohol, fentanyl analogs, heroin, meth, cocaine); NOT just an opioid problem, it's a drug problem
- Some use Narcan multiple times in a week because they use it as a safety net and push their high up further

Suicide:

- First time since 1960's that the US life expectancy has dropped in the US
- Pain clinic closures, rules, regulations instill fear in individuals who take opioids, has led to suicidal thoughts and suicides (30 year high)

Trauma:

- Underlying need for pain medication, as well as “toxic stress” (especially that occurs at a young age, brain cannot recover from that fully)
- ACE scores (abuse, neglect, dysfunction at home)

TN organizations working on opioid epidemic:

- TN Together
- Metro Drug Coalition
- East TN Opioid Conference (2018 slides: <https://metrodrug.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Final-Slide-Deck-Revised-03.20.2018.pdf>)
- Memphis- Lebonhour Hospital