

UT Southwestern Medical Center

Settlement

Nov. 30, 2021

To the UT Southwestern community,

The national epidemic of opioid abuse and its tragic consequences manifested on the UTSW campus in 2016 and 2018, when in separate incidents, two nurses succumbed to opioid overdoses at Clements University Hospital. After losing these two members of our campus community, UT Southwestern engaged outside consultants to help review UT Southwestern policies and practices. This review identified opportunities to improve oversight of controlled substances in our health care facilities. In particular, it became clear that we had not fully complied with our recordkeeping and reporting obligations in dispensing opioid medication in our inpatient facilities as required by regulatory authorities. Similar findings were found in the course of an investigation subsequently launched and now completed by the U.S. Department of Justice and Drug Enforcement Administration (DOJ/DEA), with which UTSW fully cooperated.

As noted in today's settlement agreement with the DOJ/DEA, prior to learning about their investigation, UTSW conducted a comprehensive compliance review of its controlled substances safeguards and procedures and invested significant resources to enhance these processes, including hiring additional staff, acquiring advanced technology and software, and implementing physical security controls like lockboxes and tamper-resistant IV tubing. In response to, and in collaboration with the DOJ/DEA's investigation, UTSW has continued to strengthen its handling of controlled substances, including the formation of a Controlled Substance Investigation Team and the installation of security cameras to deter diversion of these substances within its facilities.

The DOJ/DEA investigation has now concluded with a settlement agreement in which UTSW acknowledges our failure to comply with regulatory requirements and the payment of a fine based on the government's findings. We have implemented improvements to address identified deficiencies and ensure we comply with all relevant regulatory responsibilities.

As a leading health care institution, we are committed to meeting all legal and ethical obligations in every aspect of our operations, and specifically to following best practices in opioid stewardship, consistent with our broad commitment to maintaining a safe clinical care and workplace environment.

Daniel K. Podolsky, M.D.
President
UT Southwestern Medical Center