

SAS rallying analytics experts to fight the opioid epidemic

Opioid Analytics Users Group convenes passionate innovators to help communities and save lives

Cary, NC (May 15, 2019) Analytics provider SAS has launched the SAS® Opioid Analytics Users Group to unite data experts who want to help those on the front lines turn the tide of the opioid epidemic. Led by an advisory board consisting of leaders from academia and the public and private sectors, the users group will share novel solutions with the health, government and technology communities to inform new policies and strategies.

“The opioid epidemic has ignited urgent research efforts and new programs across the country,” said Steve Kearney, PharmD, SAS Medical Director. “Many of these efforts involve applying analytics to the data behind the epidemic. We want to gather talented analytical minds and see what can be accomplished when we work together.”

Open to SAS users in the US, the group will be guided by domain experts in both the opioid epidemic and analytics who will guide the group’s activities to ensure the best practices, discoveries and methodologies created will be relevant and valuable to stakeholders.

All 50 state governments, all 15 executive federal departments and hundreds of counties and municipalities use SAS. SAS has also been a standard in colleges and universities for more than 40 years. With such a diverse membership, the users group will be able to look at many facets of a complex problem.

For instance, how can we curb the alarming rise in illicit drugs such as fentanyl, which has surpassed prescription opioids as the leading cause of overdose deaths? How can we identify people at risk for substance use disorder? What’s the best way to get them treatment, particularly those who live in rural areas? How can we identify systems of fraud or prescribers who stray well beyond CDC guidelines?

The SAS Opioid Analytics Users Group Advisory Board met for the first time at the recent National Prescription Drug Abuse and Heroin Summit in Atlanta. The board includes advocates, scientists, law enforcement and public health representatives from North Carolina, New Jersey, Colorado, the University of Kentucky and RTI International (a non-profit research institute), as well as Kearney and Christina Emrich, the SAS users group administrator.

From investigations by the US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General to student research at Carnegie Mellon University to pioneering data integration in New Jersey, there are countless possibilities for analytics to curtail the opioid crisis.

“Our users combine analytics prowess with a desire to improve the world,” said Kearney. “Let’s focus our passion for using data for good on this tragic public health emergency.”

People interested in joining the virtual group should visit sas.com/en_us/connect/user-groups.html.

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