



90 State Street • Suite 825  
Albany, NY 12207-1717  
518.462.2293  
Fax: 518.462.2150  
www.nyhpa.org

June 16, 2015

Letters to the Editor  
Post Star

To the Editor:

Your editorial and recent stories about the toll heroin and opioid abuse takes on both addicts and their families highlights a growing problem in our society. This multi-faceted issue doesn't have a simple solution—certainly not one as simple as insurance coverage of inpatient treatment, and laying blame for Nico Scroggy's death on the health plan is unfair and even reprehensible, some might say.

Your coverage illustrates that too often families have suffered devastating losses even when an addicted loved one has sought and received repeated treatments in multiple settings including inpatient care. Part of the problem is finding successful treatment options. The key word: "successful." Treatment programs and facilities are not all equal, and lack of information makes it difficult for plans, patients and families to evaluate treatment.

Last year's legislation that recently took effect requires plans to use a state evaluation or nationally recognized best evidence standards for treatment protocols approved by the Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services. Both recommend utilizing the "least restrictive" setting first. While the legislation sets clear rules for coverage of services and treatment for substance abuse disorders, we still lack standards to evaluate treatment providers and facilities. Absent these, we could easily end up wasting precious dollars and time on care that is ineffective and potentially inappropriate. A special workgroup created by the new law is developing the standards and performance measures that will help provide valuable information to ensure New Yorkers who need treatment are getting quality services. Still unanswered, though, are questions about the duration and intensity of services.

New York's health plans are committed to helping address the heroin and opioid addiction problem in our communities. Don't cast them as the enemy in a battle that needs every soldier possible fighting together.

Sincerely,

Paul F. Macielak  
President & CEO  
New York Health Plan Association

OFFICERS:

*CHAIR*

Robert Hinckley  
Capital District Physicians'  
Health Plan

*VICE CHAIR*

Michelle Marto  
UnitedHealth Group

*SECRETARY*

Fr. Patrick Frawley  
Fidelis Care New York

*TREASURER*

Denise Gonick, Esq.  
MVP Health Care

*PRESIDENT & CEO*

Paul F. Macielak, Esq.