Carla was a 19-year-old, bright, enthusiastic, college student with a future full of numerous opportunities. She wanted to be a primary school teacher like her mother did—she wanted to become a legacy for family. And she did—Carla died of an overdose of oxycodone and heroin. Her mother, who had to identify her body at the city morgue, had called her family physician and community pharmacist searching for answers to how she could help Carla get some help with her substance use disorder—help that never came and Carla become one of the thousands that have died from an opioid overdose.

This book is dedicated to the loving memory of Carla and the 200,000 people who have died of an opioid overdose and to their grieving families. The book is also dedicated to the army of first responders and other healthcare practitioners who are working tirelessly trying to prevent any additional deaths from America’s number one public health issue—the opioid epidemic.

My last dedication is to my mother and many others who helped me overcome my opioid substance use disorder and find recovery. Treatment works and recovery is possible, but it begins with someone reaching out to the victim of substance use disorder offering help and support. The purpose of this text is having many helping hands reaching out to help the victim of substance use disorder find recovery.
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One of my patients told me on her initial admission to treatment for opioid substance use disorder: “I have hit bottom, I don’t want to live this way any more. I am a mother, wife, sister, and daughter of the greatest family on earth. Please help me. I just can’t stop, and my hell is looking at my husband and holding my two-year-old, promising to stop using pain medications but knowing that I can’t. Can you help me?”

She entered and completed an eight-week treatment program highly motivated and had begun an extended aftercare program when her husband found her dead from an overdose on a Sunday morning. For most of America, she became just another tragic statistic of one of the most devastating drug epidemics in American history. For me, it became personal—such a tragic loss of one of the finest young women that I have ever known. I felt I had to do more because her death could have been prevented and I did not want our children to grow up in a culture where opioid overdose becomes commonplace.

_I had a solution:_ Incorporate one of most respected professions in America—pharmacy—into the fight against the opioid epidemic. In 2017, the United States is confronted with an epidemic: More than 49,000 individuals died from opioid related overdoses escalating from 42,000 deaths in 2016. The number of deaths continues to rise with no relief in sight. The disease is _opioid use disorders_—the substance use disorder involving licit and illicit opioids. Pharmacists, whose training and exposure to the public in various healthcare settings, can provide effective interventions to this devastating epidemic. ASHP, through publications such as this text, recognizes the importance of this epidemic as a top priority and, therefore, has focused its education and training on the prevention, intervention, and treatment of opioid use disorders.

I felt I needed to inform our pharmacists and other healthcare practitioners how to help their patients and families by providing basic information and tools to prevent, intervene, and treat opioid use disordered individuals. This text hopefully will help pharmacists and other healthcare workers understand what they can do to stop this tragic loss of life.

The contributing authors of this text are clinicians who have their hands on the pulse of the epidemic and clinical expertise in managing the patient who has an opioid use disorder. This group of experts has seen thousands of these patients and their practice points are an essential part of this training text. Each chapter includes clinical pearls—Practice Points—information learned from the contributors’ medical, nursing, and pharmacy clinical practices. The appendices, which provide useful information for practitioners and their patients, include references and resources and a Naloxone products table. These resources are the latest information on effective prevention, intervention, and treatment strategies to address the opioid epidemic. The book discusses the current opioid epidemic and the neuroscience of substance use disorder and informs a pharmacist and other healthcare practitioners how to:

- Use a patient friendly screening process
- Develop brief intervention skills
- Make a successful referral to treatment
- Explain the various opioid use disorders treatment options
- Aid in an opioid overdose rescue
- Assist family members in their search for resources and help
- Effectively manage a patient who has substance use disorder
- Work with pregnant and postpartum women (and their infants) who have an opioid substance use disorder
Address the concerns of a colleague with substance use disorder

Develop pharmacy curriculum to prepare future pharmacists to address the opioid epidemic and other substance use disorders

Chapters 1 and 2, written by Kevin McCauley, a physician and award-winning author of Pleasure Unwoven and Memo to Self: Protecting Sobriety with the Science of Safety, a DVD series about the neuroscience of substance use disorder and recovery, discuss the scope of the problem of substance use disorder and the neurobiology of opioid use disorders. In Chapter 3, Wally Cross, a pharmacist and certified substance use disorders counselor explains what an opioid use disorder is. Chapter 4 by Sarah Melton, Merrill Norton, and Michael O’Neil—pharmacists specializing in substance use disorder and psychiatric pharmacy—discusses the role of the pharmacist in screening and caring of patient with substance use disorders. Jeffrey Bratberg and Kathryn Nash, both board-certified clinical pharmacists, coauthored Chapter 5, which explains medications used to treat opioid overdose and opioid maintenance treatment modalities. Ted Parran, a board-certified substance use disorders medicine physician specializing in pain management, reviews pain management considerations in Chapter 6. In Chapter 7, Michael O’Neil and Sarah Melton discuss issues that concern detection and deterrence of substance abuse and drug diversion. In Chapter 8, Carla Saunders, a nurse practitioner specializing in neonatal abstinence syndrome, Sarah Melton, and Michael O’Neil discuss the management of opioid use in pregnant and postpartum women and caring for infants with neonatal abstinence syndrome.

Wally Cross and Jeff Baldwin, who is a professor at the University of Nebraska and past president of the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, focus on the topic of substance use disorders in the pharmacy profession in Chapter 9. In Chapter 10, Jeff Baldwin and Kathryn Nash look at future educational curriculum requirements for pharmacy practice.

The contributors to the text are experts in their respective specialties, and they have contributed their time and expertise to informing all pharmacy and other healthcare professionals about the latest information on the management of opioid use disorders. As the editor of this text, I would like to thank all of the contributors for their unselfish dedication and expertise to the completion of this text.

Now let’s go to work saving America from this terrible and devastating epidemic!

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To write a book on an overwhelming drug epidemic that has brought tremendous sadness and destruction to our society takes a group of dedicated people determined to make a difference. First and foremost, I would like to thank the medical, nursing, and pharmacy contributors to the book, who spent hundreds of hours working on their chapters. This body of work is an exceptional contribution in addressing the solutions to the opioid epidemic.

In addition to these dedicated professionals, I would like to thank ASHP’s wonderful editorial team. Beth Campbell, who was ASHP Acquisitions Editor for Special Publishing, motivated me to start the book and walked me through the editorial process. Ruth Bloom’s remarkable editorial expertise was an invaluable component to me and all of the authors. My most profound acknowledgement is to ASHP for their recognition of the value of pharmacy practitioners in battling the current opioid epidemic.

My deepest gratitude goes to my associate editors, Drs. Jeff Baldwin and Michael O’Neil for being my sounding board and another pair of glasses in the editorial process. These two esteemed professors of pharmacy practice kept me on task and purpose to provide the best consolidated text on what healthcare practitioners could do to help battle what has become our society’s number one public health issue—the opioid epidemic.