
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



FOR INFORMATION CALL

May 11, 2016

Ald. Michael Murphy
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Heroin study funding to go before Public Safety Committee

The **Public Safety Committee** will take up a resolution at its meeting Thursday to accept matching funds from the Medical College of Wisconsin's Department of Emergency Medicine that would support a comprehensive study of the heroin and opiate epidemic raging across Milwaukee and southeastern Wisconsin.

The committee will meet at 9 a.m. on Thursday (May 12) in room 301-B at City Hall, 200 E. Wells St.

Alderman Michael J. Murphy, who has helped push City of Milwaukee efforts to fight the heroin and opiate epidemic, said the measure would launch a two-year collaborative community-based, data-driven initiative between the City of Milwaukee and the MCW's Department of Emergency Medicine to look at key metrics affecting those caught up in the epidemic.

"As a community we must unite to confront the tragic trend of increasing heroin and opiate addiction that is threatening residents throughout our city, state and nation," Alderman Murphy said. "The overall goal of this project is to use data to drive targeted policies that will have a measureable impact in the community, and help us wage a better battle that can hopefully save lives."

Dr. Stephen Hargarten, MD, MPH, professor and chair of the MCW's Department of Emergency Medicine, said the matching partnership will commit \$25,000 each from the department and the City of Milwaukee in 2016, and again in 2017.

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Partnership/ADD ONE

“We firmly support the partnership with the City of Milwaukee in addressing the opioid and heroin death epidemic and look forward to working with city leadership and other sectors of civil society in finding ways to prevent these tragic deaths,” Dr. Hargarten said. “The Injury Research Center is dedicated to partnering with governmental and community partnerships to address this epidemic.”

Mayor Tom Barrett said: “The heroin and opioid addiction crisis is tearing apart families and fueling an increase in the illicit drug trade. This is an issue that demands increased cooperation between the city, county and community stakeholders. I thank Alderman Michael Murphy for his continued leadership and focus on addressing the heroin epidemic and am grateful to the Medical College of Wisconsin for funding the grant.”

Milwaukee Police Chief Edward Flynn said the Milwaukee Police Department supports partnerships in the city and region to address the heroin and opioid addiction crisis.

“Unfortunately, the American medical system’s well-intended efforts to control pain have devolved into the dramatic increase in opioid addiction being experienced in Milwaukee, throughout the state, and throughout the nation,” Chief Flynn said. “I support Alderman Murphy’s holistic approach to addressing this epidemic from a healthcare perspective. The Milwaukee Police Department continues its law enforcement efforts to combat the scourge of opioid addiction and will gladly partner with every agency from law enforcement to social services to healthcare providers.”

Since 2005, Milwaukee County has seen a 495% increase in heroin-related deaths, and as of August 2015, heroin represented nearly half of all drug-related deaths in Milwaukee County.

Brian L. Peterson, M.D., Chief Medical Examiner, Milwaukee County Medical Examiner's Office, said that of ALL of the autopsies performed at his office for Milwaukee County in 2015, more than a quarter represented drug overdoses.

“This scourge cuts across age, race, and demographic boundaries, and with ‘designer’ and other new drugs appearing, will only become more serious,” Dr. Peterson . “Grant based cooperation between city, county, and community agencies represents our most important response to understand and reduce this threat. I applaud Alderman Murphy’s efforts and pledge the full support of the Medical Examiner's Office in responding to this health disaster.”

For example, if approved, the study would take a closer look at Naloxone, an opioid reversal agent that is readily available in the community. Alderman Murphy said estimates of how often Naloxone is utilized are not being tracked, and it is unclear if these cases are entering the health care system to address the underlying causes of the overdose.

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Partnership/ADD TWO

Alderman Murphy said he is working to secure an additional \$50,000 for the study, to be contributed by a local foundation.

The city will contribute \$25,000 in 2016 and in 2017 toward the partnership with MCW, as directed in a 2016 city budget amendment sponsored by Alderman Murphy and unanimously approved by the Common Council.

Thursday's Public Safety Committee meeting **will be televised live** on the City Channel (Channel 25 on Time Warner Cable and on AT&T U-Verse Channel 99) in the City of Milwaukee. It can also be viewed via streaming video on the city website at www.city.milwaukee.gov/Channel25.

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