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NEWS FROM THEDACARE™

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THEDACARE PARTNERS WITH WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS FOR INNOVATIVE VIVITROL PROGRAM

It's One Small Step in Battling Heroin Addiction in Community

ThedaCare has partnered with the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC), Options Outpatient AODA Treatment, and Nova Inpatient AODA Treatment in Oshkosh and the manufacturers of Vivitrol for an innovative program to combat the growing problem of opioid abuse among prison populations in Wisconsin. ThedaCare joined the DOC Vivitrol Program in July to treat prisoners while serving their sentences so they would be less likely to relapse upon release. The program is currently available in Waupaca, Oshkosh and Encircle Health in Appleton.

“As the surgeon general said, addiction is a health problem and not a moral failing,” said Eric Smiltneek, MD, family physician for ThedaCare Physicians in Oshkosh and assistant clinical professor for the Medical College of Wisconsin. “ThedaCare believes strongly in improving the health of the community and is excited to take a lead in providing medication assisted treatment to help people suffering from addiction. Partnering with the DOC to keep people out of prison and drug free is vital for the health of our communities.”

The United States has the highest rate of incarceration in the world (937 per 100,000 adults). Approximately one-third of heroin users pass through correctional facilities annually. Few receive medication assisted treatment (either methadone or buprenorphine) for opioid use disorder during incarceration, and nearly three-quarters relapse to heroin use within three months of release, reports *Addiction and Science Clinical Practice*.

Jon Litscher, DOC Secretary, said the program has been very successful in Wisconsin. “We’re pleased to partner with ThedaCare and Vivitrol for this important program,” he said. “We understand how important it is to stem the tide of opioid addiction where we can. This program allows us to make a positive impact for these individuals as they serve their time and are released into the community to become productive members of society.”

Krista Bilgo, RN and practice supervisor for ThedaCare Physicians-Waupaca, helped develop the program. “Vivitrol is an opiate receptor blocker that prevents addicts from getting high and reduces craving for opiates and alcohol,” said Bilgo. “It is a once-monthly injection that has been shown to reduce overdose after incarceration by up to 5 times and triple the likelihood of completing outpatient treatment.”

Patients are referred to ThedaCare by the DOC. “The patient is scheduled to see one of our providers and have lab work completed,” Bilgo continued. “After the provider sees the patient,



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then one of our registered nurses completes patient teaching and administers the Vivitrol injection. Patients return monthly for the injection and see the provider every three months.

“It is important for open and honest communication from the patient so we can best help them,” she added. “We are seeing some success, which is exciting for our staff and providers to see. This DOC Vivitrol Program has given us an option to help patients who have been struggling with addiction and prior to this, we were very limited on how we could help them.”

For more information on the DOC Vivitrol Program, go to the [DOC](#).

For more than 100 years, ThedaCare™ has been committed to finding a better way to deliver serious and complex healthcare to patients throughout Northeast Wisconsin. The organization serves over 200,000 patients annually and employs more than 7,000 healthcare professionals throughout the region. ThedaCare has seven hospitals located in Appleton, Neenah, Berlin, Waupaca, Shawano, New London and Wild Rose as well as 34 clinics in nine counties. ThedaCare is the first in Wisconsin to be a Mayo Clinic Care Network Member, giving our specialists the ability to consult with Mayo Clinic experts on a patient’s care. ThedaCare is a non-profit healthcare organization with a level II trauma center, comprehensive cancer treatment, stroke and cardiac programs as well as a foundation dedicated to community service. ThedaCare Regional Cancer Center in Appleton opened in February. For more information, visit www.thedacare.org or follow ThedaCare on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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