

Keep Your Pin Up: Students Combating Opioid Use Disorder Stigma with Lapel Pins

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Abstract

Drug overdose death rates continue to rise – more Americans and Coloradans are dying of drug overdoses than ever before. Despite efforts to shift the narrative, our society continues to struggle to acknowledge substance use disorders as medical conditions worthy of medical care. Rural settings are no exception. In this piece, a University of Colorado medical student describes her experience working to fight stigma surrounding opioid use disorder in both lay and healthcare professional populations. By designing and employing the use of lapel pins, students are leading a grassroots campaign to combat opioid use disorder stigma among healthcare professionals at the outset of their careers. Using real experiences from a rural clinic, the authors explore barriers to addiction care, including how stigma can perpetuate sub-optimal care for treatable medical conditions.