

April 10, 2018

Robert R. Redfield, MD  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
U.S. Department of Health & Human Services  
1600 Clifton Road  
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027

Dear Director Redfield:

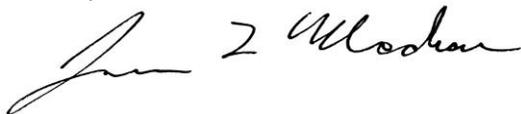
On behalf of the physician and medical student members of the American Medical Association (AMA), I am writing to urge the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to further investigate the causes of the recent decrease in life expectancy and increase in premature mortality in the United States, as evidenced by a CDC report released in December 2017, titled [Mortality in the United States, 2016](#). In addition, CDC data show that the U.S. lags far behind all other industrialized countries in reducing maternal deaths and is the only high-resource country with a rising maternal mortality rate. Pregnancy-related deaths have dramatically increased in the U.S. in the past 25 years; an estimated 700 women die of pregnancy-related causes each year in the U.S.

The CDC recently released new [data](#) on the increase in deaths related to drug overdoses and found that opioids were involved in 66.4 percent of drug overdose deaths in 2016, representing a 27.9 percent rate increase from 2015. The recent CDC data are alarming as they indicate that the national epidemic of deaths due to opioid overdoses is continuing its rapid growth, and overtaking many other leading causes of death. As you know, from your work on HIV/AIDS, the mortality trends for overdose deaths today are similar to the impact of HIV in the 1980s and 1990s, with mortality among certain age groups increasing due to overdose deaths even as death rates from cancer, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes are declining. The AMA and an AMA-led task force of 26 medical societies have been working on a multipronged strategy to help bring an end to the opioid epidemic. The CDC data are helpful in illuminating the severity of this crisis.

The AMA truly appreciates the CDC's work in this area. However, we remain extremely concerned about these troubling changes in mortality data. As a result, we encourage the CDC to continue its work in this important area by: (1) further investigating the causes of these unusual decreases in life expectancy and increases in death rates; and (2) making recommendations on how the U.S. can design multi-disciplinary interventions to reverse these very disturbing trends.

The AMA would be pleased to assist in these efforts. If you have any questions or want to discuss this issue further, please contact Margaret Garikes, Vice President for Federal Affairs, at [margaret.garikes@ama-assn.org](mailto:margaret.garikes@ama-assn.org), or by calling 202-789-7409.

Sincerely,



James L. Madara, MD