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Barack Obama

Weekly Address on Opioid Addiction with Special Guest Macklemore

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President Obama: Hi, everybody. I've got a special guest with me this week: Macklemore. Now, for those of you who don't share the same love for hip-hop that I do, he's a Grammy-winning artist, but he is also an advocate who's giving voice to a disease that we too often just whisper about: the disease of addiction.

Macklemore: Hey, everybody. I'm here with President Obama because I take this personally. I abused prescription drugs and I battled addiction. If I hadn't gotten the help that I needed when I needed it, I definitely would not be here today. And I want to help others facing the same challenges that I did.

President Obama: And drug overdoses now take more lives every year than traffic accidents. Deaths from opioid overdoses have tripled since 2000. A lot of [the] time, they're from legal drugs prescribed by a doctor. So, addiction doesn't always start in some dark alley; it often starts in a medicine cabinet. In fact, a new study released this month found that 44 percent of Americans know someone who has been addicted to prescription pain killers.



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Macklemore: I didn't just know someone -- I lost someone. My friend Kevin overdosed on painkillers when he was just 21 years old. Addiction is like any other disease -- it doesn't discriminate. It doesn't care what color you are, whether you're a guy or a girl, rich or poor, whether you live in a[n] inner-city, a suburb, or rural America. This doesn't just happen to other people's kids or in some other neighborhood. It can happen to any of us.

President Obama: That's why just talking about this crisis isn't enough. We need to get treatment to more people who need it. My Administration is working with communities to reduce overdose deaths, including with medication. We're working with law enforcement to help people get into treatment instead of jail. And under Obamacare, health plans in the Marketplace have to include coverage for treatment.

Macklemore: I know recovery isn't easy or quick, but along with the 12-step program, treatment has saved my life. And recovery works. We need our leaders in Washington to fund it, and for people to know how to find it.

President Obama: We all need to do more to make that happen. I've asked Congress to expand access to recovery services, and to give first responders the tools they need to treat overdoses before it's too late. This week, the House passed several bills about opioids -- which is great -- but unless they also make investments in more treatment, it won't get Americans the help that they need. On top of funding, doctors also need more training about the power of pain medication they prescribe, and the risks that those pain medications carry. Another way our country can help those suffering in private is to make this conversation public.

Macklemore: When you're going through it, it's hard to imagine there could be anything worse than addiction. But shame and the stigma associated with the disease keeps too many people from seeking the help that they actually need. Addiction isn't a personal choice or a personal failing, and sometimes it takes more than a strong will to get better. It takes a strong community and accessible resources.



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President Obama: The good news is, there's hope. When we talk about opioid abuse as the public health problem that it is, more people will seek the help that they need. More people will find the strength to recover, just like Macklemore and millions of Americans have. We'll see fewer preventable deaths and fewer broken families.

Macklemore: We have to tell people who need help that it's okay to ask for it. We've got to make sure they know where to get it.

President Obama: We all have a role to play. Even if we haven't fought this battle in our own lives, there's a good chance we know someone who has -- or who is.

Macklemore: President Obama and I just had a powerful conversation here at the White House about opioid abuse and what we can do about it. You can catch it this summer on MTV. And to find treatment in your area, call 1-800-662-HELP.

President Obama: Thanks, everybody. Thanks, Macklemore.

Macklemore: Thank you.

President Obama: And have a great weekend.