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Dimock chief: Too many opioid pills prescribed

Dr. Myechia Minter-Jordan, president and CEO of The Dimock Center in Roxbury, joined Boston Herald Radio's "Morning Meeting" to talk about the opiate crisis and her health center. Here are excerpts of her interview:

Q: Talk to us about the center and the sort of work you are doing in the Roxbury, Dorchester, Mattapan and Jamaica Plain neighborhoods.

A: The Dimock Community Health Center is the second-largest health center in Boston, and we serve over 17,000 patients and families primarily from underserved areas, and we've been doing that for over 150 years. We have three main program areas. We have a health services area that delivers the kind of care that one would expect in terms of primary and specialty care. We also have child and family services, which is early education, Head Start... And then we also have behavioral health... We have a shelter that houses 26 families, for homeless families, we have a halfway house, actually four halfway houses on our campus, two for men and two for women, an inpatient detox service, which has 35 beds for folks who are acutely detoxing from

alcohol and illegal substances, as well as outpatient mental health and outpatient addiction services. In our detox alone, we service over 3,000 clients each year, so as we think about what's happening now with the opioid epidemic, the way in which we have created our model, which is very comprehensive and holistic, is part of the answer to how we can really start to make a change in the opioid epidemic.

Q: Where do you see the opioid problem start?

A: This is a multi-factorial problem, and physicians certainly have a role. There are way too many prescription pills out there, from a number of physicians, whether or not it's a dentist, a primary care physician, a surgeon. We are giving prescriptions in too large of a quantity at one time. There are also issues with education, with patient empowerment, understanding that these are addictive substances.

Q: Why has this become such a big problem?

A: It has now become an epidemic, because it affects far more people. I think the other piece to this is that people are dying at a much faster rate than they had been before, and that has also made this an epidemic. People are taking these medications really, and then are going fast into street drugs, and then those street drugs are actually killing them, and the street drugs are much more potent.