

# BCBS of Tennessee Takes a Stance for Acupuncture

Editorial Staff | DIGITAL EXCLUSIVE

BlueCross BlueShield (BCBS) of Tennessee, the state's largest insurance provider, is starting the year off with some significant changes—they have dropped Oxycontin from their list of covered prescriptions and added acupuncture coverage.

Dr. Andrea Willis, Chief Medical Officer for BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee, said "We knew it was a public health problem, and that we weren't part of the solution. We were part of the problem."<sup>1</sup>

Tennessee, who has the third highest per-capita opioid prescription rate in the U.S., lost approximately 1,200 people in 2017—America's worst year for drug overdoses.<sup>2,3</sup>

Oxycontin has been replaced with Xtampza (an extended-release, abuse-deterrent capsule formulation of oxycodone), and Morphabond (oral tablets containing morphine sulfate, an opioid agonist).<sup>4</sup> The formulas of Xtampza and Morphabond are more difficult to crush and delay the high.<sup>1</sup> Despite the fact that these replacement drugs cost more, BCBS will keep member co-pays the same as they were for Oxycontin.

Although Tennessee's population of licensed acupuncturists is minimal compared to states like California or New York, the hope is that other insurance providers across the U.S. will soon follow the Volunteer State's lead.

## References

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MARCH 2019