



Female Opioid Research and Clinical Experts

FORCE Appoints New Chairwoman, Behshad Sheldon, to Lead Efforts to Improve Treatment Access and Reduce Stigma of Opioid Addiction

FORCE to Attend Annual Meeting of the College on Problems of Drug Dependence (CPDD)

FORCE Elects New Board Member, Sharon Walsh, Ph.D., Director of the Center on Drug and Alcohol Research, University of Kentucky

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PRINCETON, N.J.--([BUSINESS WIRE](#))--Nonprofit organization, FORCE (Female Opioid Research and Clinical Experts), today announced it has appointed board member Behshad Sheldon to the position of Chairwoman, effective immediately. Sheldon, a 25-year veteran of the pharmaceutical industry and former CEO of Braeburn Pharmaceuticals, is best known for her work identifying new medicines to treat chronic, stigmatized diseases such as opioid addiction, working to bring them through FDA approval to market where they can help patients.

In December of 2016, the CDC released data showing that opioid use disorder has quadrupled since 1999 with 91 people per day losing their lives. That same data showed that half a million lives have been lost between 2000 and 2015¹.

“Sheldon has become a clarion voice in opioid addiction, calling for evidence-based medicine to become the standard-of-care for patients suffering from opioid use disorder,” said Andrea Barthwell, M.D., D. F.A.S.A.M., former Chairwoman for FORCE, founder of Two Dreams, and past president of ASAM. “She has championed a stigmatized patient population, bringing to market innovative new treatment options including the landmark buprenorphine implant that achieved FDA approval in 2016. We know her voice will serve the mission of the organization to reduce and eliminate the stigma that keeps opioid use disorder patients from seeking treatment.”

FORCE, formed in June of 2016, is an alliance of women with scientific, health policy and medical expertise in opioid addiction who are well-positioned to achieve FORCE's mission of reducing the stigma and treatment barriers that people with opioid addiction face every day. These efforts aim to save lives by ensuring that more patients receive effective treatment.

Sheldon has noted at conferences and in media interviews that treatment decisions are often made by women (mothers, wives, daughters, partners, sisters), and so it made sense to create an organization of expert women that could speak to those seeking the best treatment options

for themselves and for loved ones. The formation of FORCE was announced in an event held at the National Press Club in 2016.

“The scientific evidence tells us that this chronic brain disease should be treated with medicine,” said Sheldon. “When we allow ‘getting clean’ or ‘being cured’ to be emphasized as the standard, the false notion that living your life productively requires the absence of medication is perpetuated. Apply that logic to any other chronic disease and it falls apart. Until we adopt an evidence-based approach to treating the disease of addiction, this epidemic will continue to rage.”

Sheldon continued, “Those making treatment decisions for patients, which are most often women, need to be armed with the facts so they can help their loved ones conquer this insidious disease. There is no time to waste so I am thrilled to be able to fully focus on the mission of FORCE at this critical time.”

FORCE’s actions to date have included celebrating the accomplishments of the first two FORCE AWARD recipients, Nora D. Volkow, M.D., Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and Leana Wen, M.D., Commissioner, Baltimore City Health Department. The awards were used to support three travel grants to this year’s scientific conference, College on Problems of Drug Dependence (CPDD), as well as a one-year fellowship.

An important part of FORCE’s mission is to stand up for the rights of those with opioid use disorder to access all three proven medical treatments; methadone, naltrexone, buprenorphine. As such, an [op-ed was submitted](#) and published to speak out against the recent comments made by HHS Secretary Tom Price.

Members of FORCE also speak with media directly on the salient issues impacting the opioid epidemic. [WebMD published](#) an article quoting FORCE members on June 8th.

FORCE is committed to working to address the disease of addiction and bring to bear the power of the team that has been assembled. As Chairwoman, Sheldon will guide the organization’s objectives and efforts to support patient access for quality long-term care. In her new capacity Sheldon will also be responsible for overseeing organizational fundraising and contributions.

Sharon Walsh, Ph.D., Pharm.D, has also been elected as a new member of the board. Walsh currently serves as the Director of the Center on Drug and Alcohol Research, Professor of Behavioral Science, Psychiatry, Pharmacology and Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of Kentucky and is a past President of the College on Problems of Drug Dependence. Walsh joins the distinguished group of experts currently serving on the board including:

- Andrea Barthwell, M.D., D.F.A.S.A.M. Past President of the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM) and former Deputy Director of Demand Reduction White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP)

- Genie L Bailey, M.D., D.A.B.A.M., F.A.S.A.M., Clinical Associate Professor of Psychiatry, Warren Alpert Medical School of Brown University and Director of Research, Stanley Street Treatment & Resources, Inc.
- Shruti Kulkarni, Esq., Policy Director for Center for Lawful Access and Abuse Deterrence (CLAAD)
- Sonnie Kim, Pharm.D, SVP Clinical Development and Medical Affairs, Braeburn Pharmaceuticals

Sheldon's 25 years of experience includes leading pharmaceutical development and commercialization in the United States and globally. Sheldon most recently served as the CEO and President for Braeburn Pharmaceuticals where she brought a novel buprenorphine implant, Probuphine, through FDA approval and to market. Sheldon has led teams at Otsuka, Bristol-Myers Squibb, SmithKline Beecham. She holds a BS in Neuroscience from the University of Rochester.

More information about FORCE and its members can be found [here](#) or by contacting info@forceoutstigma.org.

About FORCE

Female Opioid Research and Clinical Experts (FORCE) was formed in June of 2016. The organization is an alliance of women with scientific, health policy and medical expertise in opioid addiction who are well positioned to achieve FORCE's mission of reducing the stigma and treatment barriers that people with opioid addiction face every day. These efforts will save lives by ensuring that more patients receive effective treatment. A list of founding members can be accessed [here](#).

¹ CDC data referenced can be found by [clicking here](#)