

VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Opioid Safety Initiative

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VIEWPOINT

Addressing the Opioid Epidemic in the United States

Lessons From the Department of Veterans Affairs

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Over the past 15 years, more than 165 000 people in the United States have died from overdoses related to prescription opioids,¹ and millions more have suffered adverse consequences.^{2,3} The misuse and abuse of prescription opioids have contributed to a precipitous increase in heroin and fentanyl overdoses.¹

Patients treated in the health care system of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are part of this epidemic. Opioid use impacts half of veterans using the VA, compared with 20% of the general population. VA patients have higher rates of psychiatric comorbidities such as depression and anxiety, which increase the risk of stress-related office visits, hospitalizations, and opioid use.

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pharmacists engage directly with opioid prescribers, similar to detailing by pharmaceutical representatives. The VA detailers use sophisticated dashboards with real-time prescriber-level data to engage clinicians in adopting best practices around opioid prescribing. This focus is not simply on reducing opioid medications, but rather on improving the safe use of opioids. Beyond detailing, the VA developed an overdose education and naloxone distribution system that has distributed tens of thousands of naloxone doses and developed standardized patient and provider education to complement other educational efforts outside of the VA that

Strategies to Address the Opioid Epidemic
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Risk Mitigation
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Opioid Safety Initiative (OSI)

- **Overdose Education and Naloxone Distribution (OEND):** As of December 31, 2017, over 125,000 naloxone prescriptions were dispensed to Veterans. From May 2014 through February 2, 2016, 172 overdose reversals were documented
- **One-on-One Provider Education (Academic Detailing):** As of December 31, 2017, specially trained VA pharmacists had nearly 21,000 outreach visits with VA opioid prescribers about OEND, opioid safety, and opioid use disorder
- **State Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMP):** 48 States and the District of Columbia are activated for VA data transmission
- **Medication Take-Back Program:** Veterans have returned over 63 tons (the equivalent of 20 elephants) of unneeded medications that have been destroyed in an environmentally responsible manner as of December 31, 2017
- **Opioid Therapy Risk Report (OTRR):** Allows Primary Care providers to review their panel of patients for a multitude of clinical parameters tracked by the tool
- **Substance Use Disorder:** Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) is available to Veterans receiving care in VA



Opioid Safety Initiative (OSI)

- **Stratification Tool for Opioid Risk Mitigation (STORM):** Allows providers to view information about risk factors for opioid overdose, suicide-related events and other harms along with potential risk mitigation strategies.
- **Complementary and Integrative Medicine:** As of August 31, 2016, over 1,000 VA providers completed the Acupuncture Training Across Clinical Settings (ATACS) program. This program has expanded Veterans' access to VA providers trained in auricular acupuncture.
- **Opioid Safety Initiative Toolkit:** Includes peer-reviewed education and guidance for both providers and Veterans and is available on the VA internet site.
- **VA/DoD Joint Pain Education and Training Program (JPEP):** Standardized training videos and 30 modules covering the full spectrum of pain management is available to VA and DoD providers.
- **VA Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) Pain Roadmap:** Provides guidance to VA facility leadership and clinicians on VHA's "Six essential elements of good pain care" with an emphasis on Veterans' self-management skills, and supporting PACT by timely access to pain specialty care, complementary and integrative health modalities and opioid use disorder treatment.



Opioid Safety Initiative (OSI) Dashboard

- **Purpose**
 - To make the totality of opioid use visible at all levels in the organization
- **Reports**
 - National
 - Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN)
 - Medical facility
 - Prescriber
 - Prescriber and patient

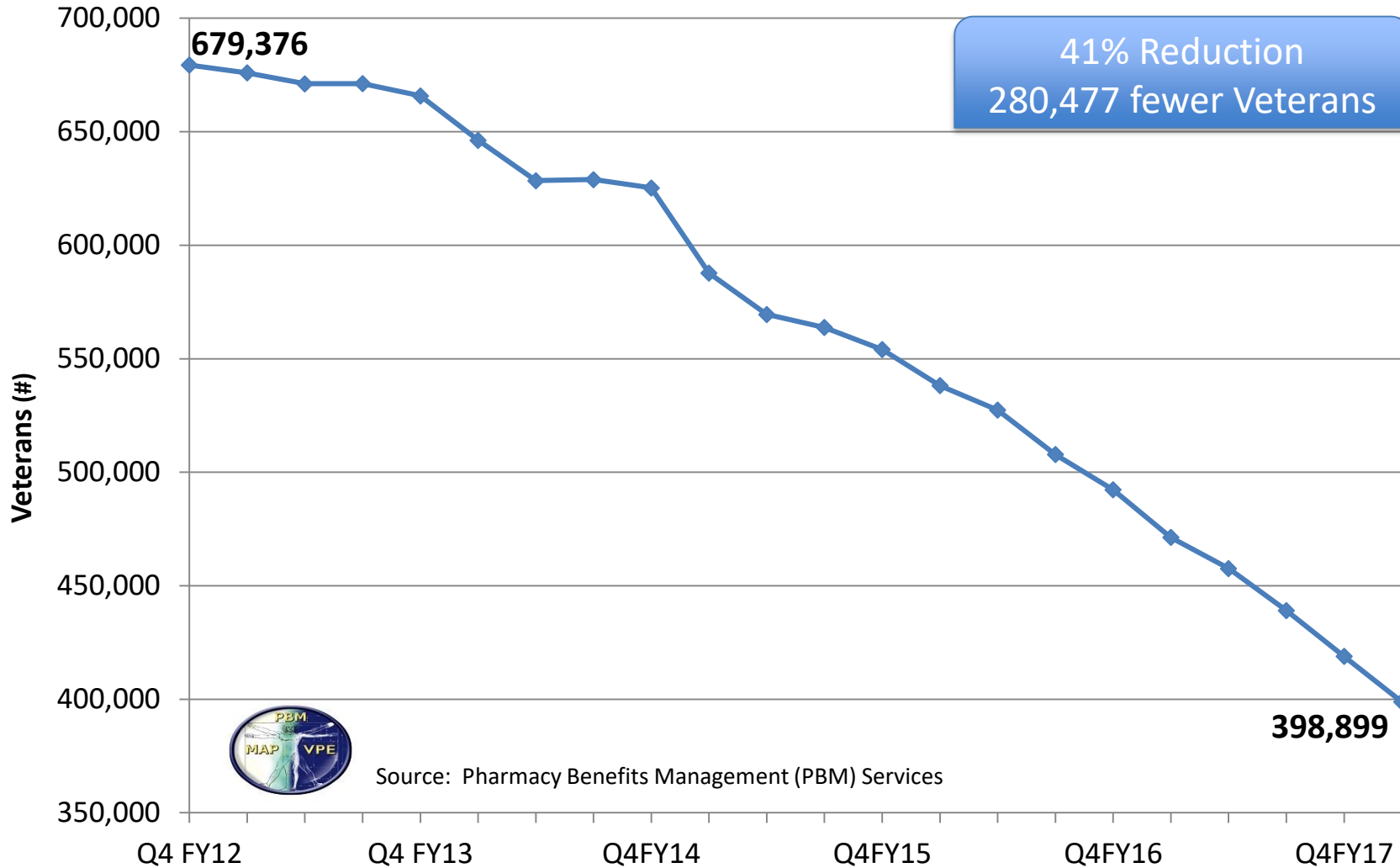


OSI Dashboard Key Metrics

- **Outpatient pharmacy users:**
 - Dispensed an opioid
 - Dispensed an opioid and benzodiazepine
 - Long-term opioid patients (≥ 90 days) with a urine drug screen within the past 365 days
 - Morphine Equivalent Daily Dosing (MEDD) stratification
- **Frequency of report updates**
 - Quarterly

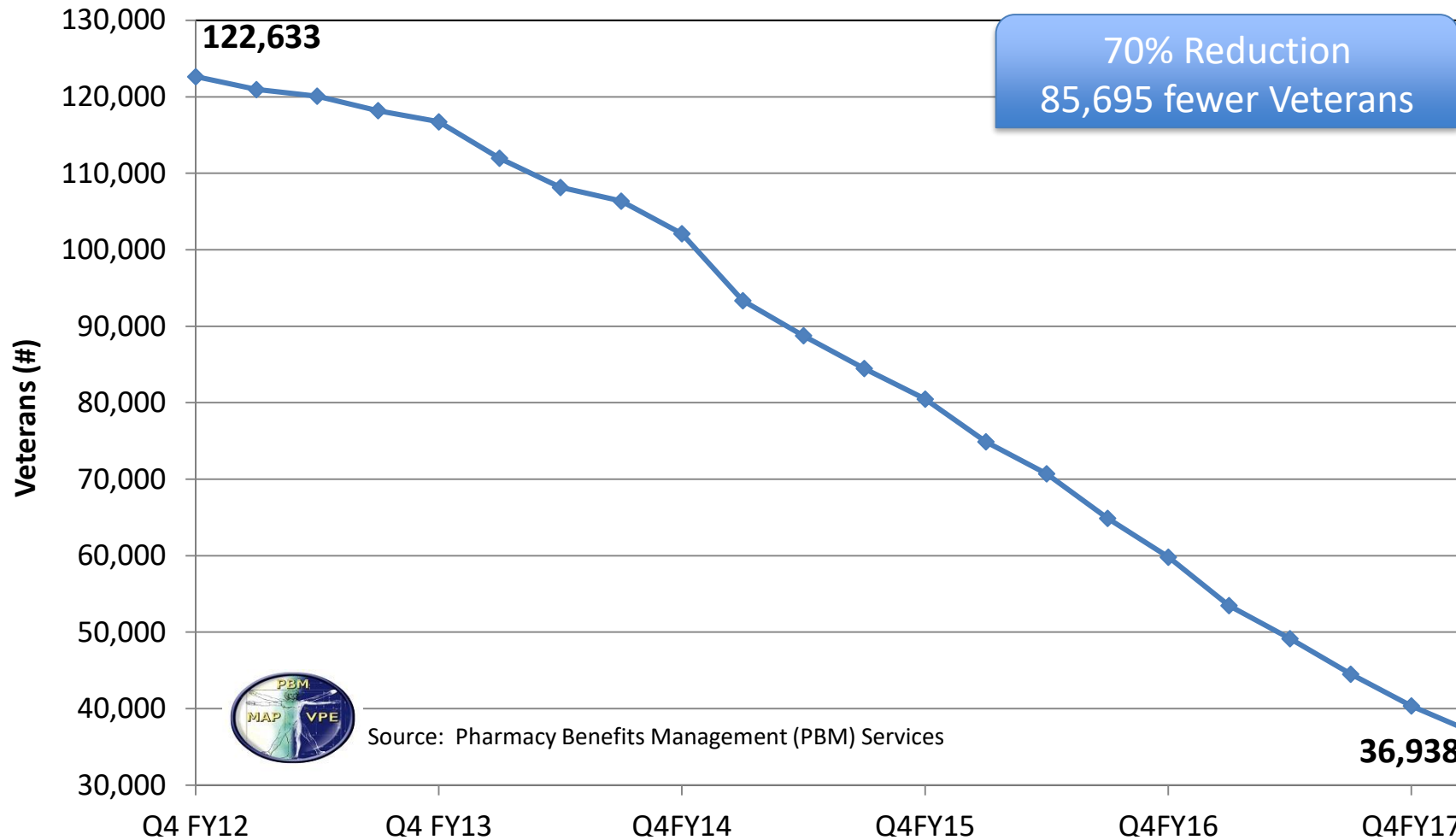


Veterans Dispensed Opioids



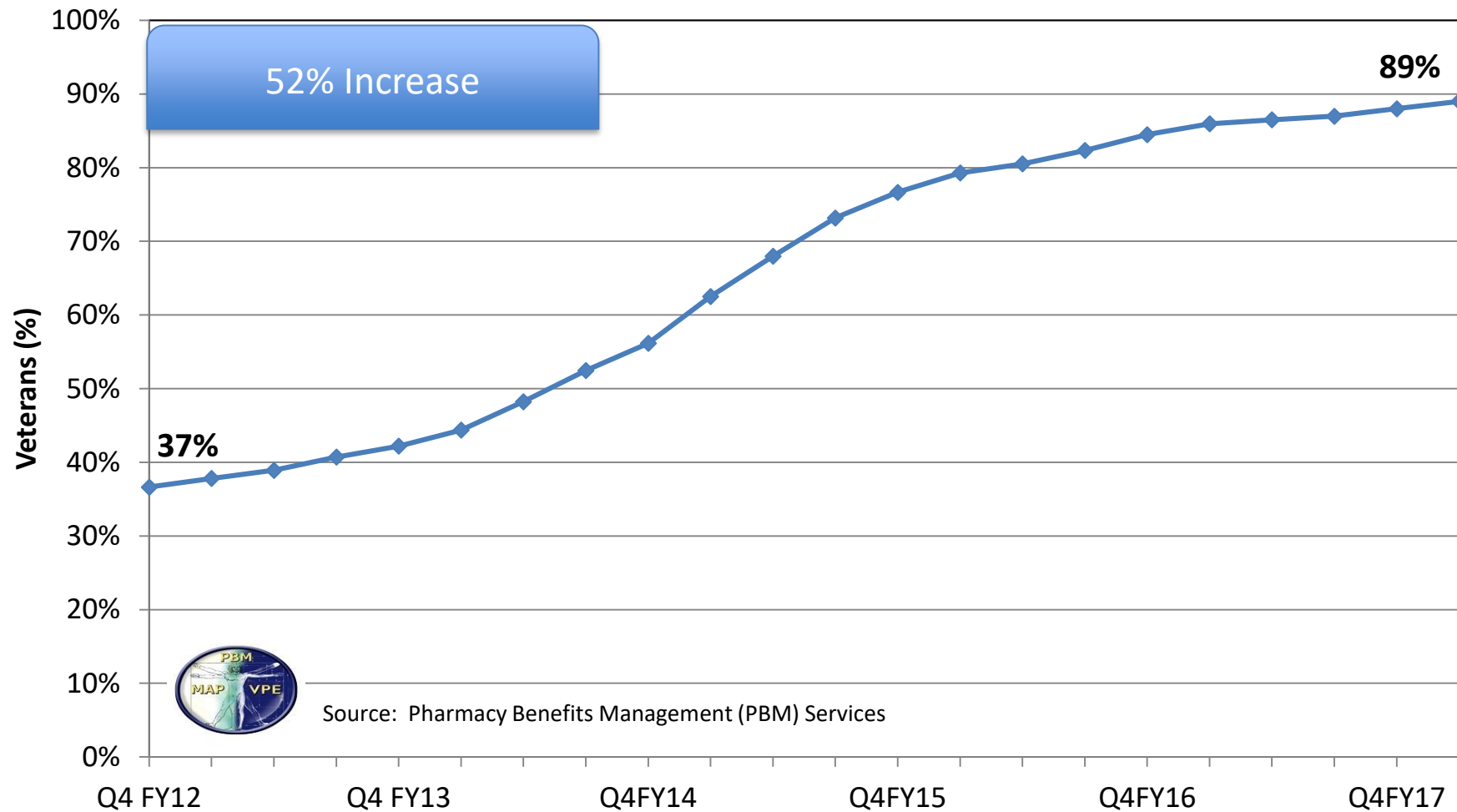


Veterans Dispensed An Opioids And A Benzodiazepine



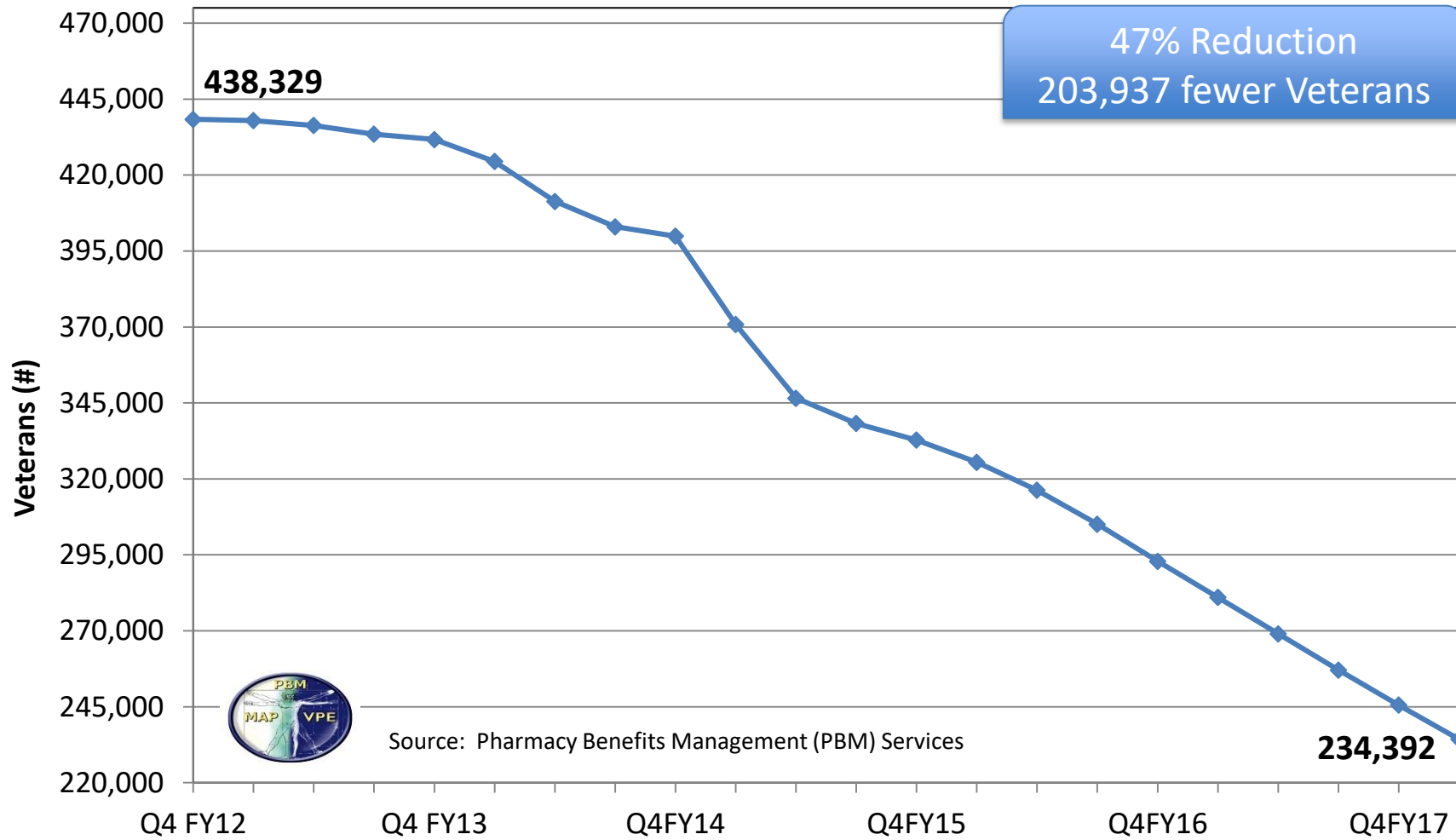


Veterans on Long-Term Opioid Therapy With a Urine Drug Screen (UDS) Completed in the Last Year



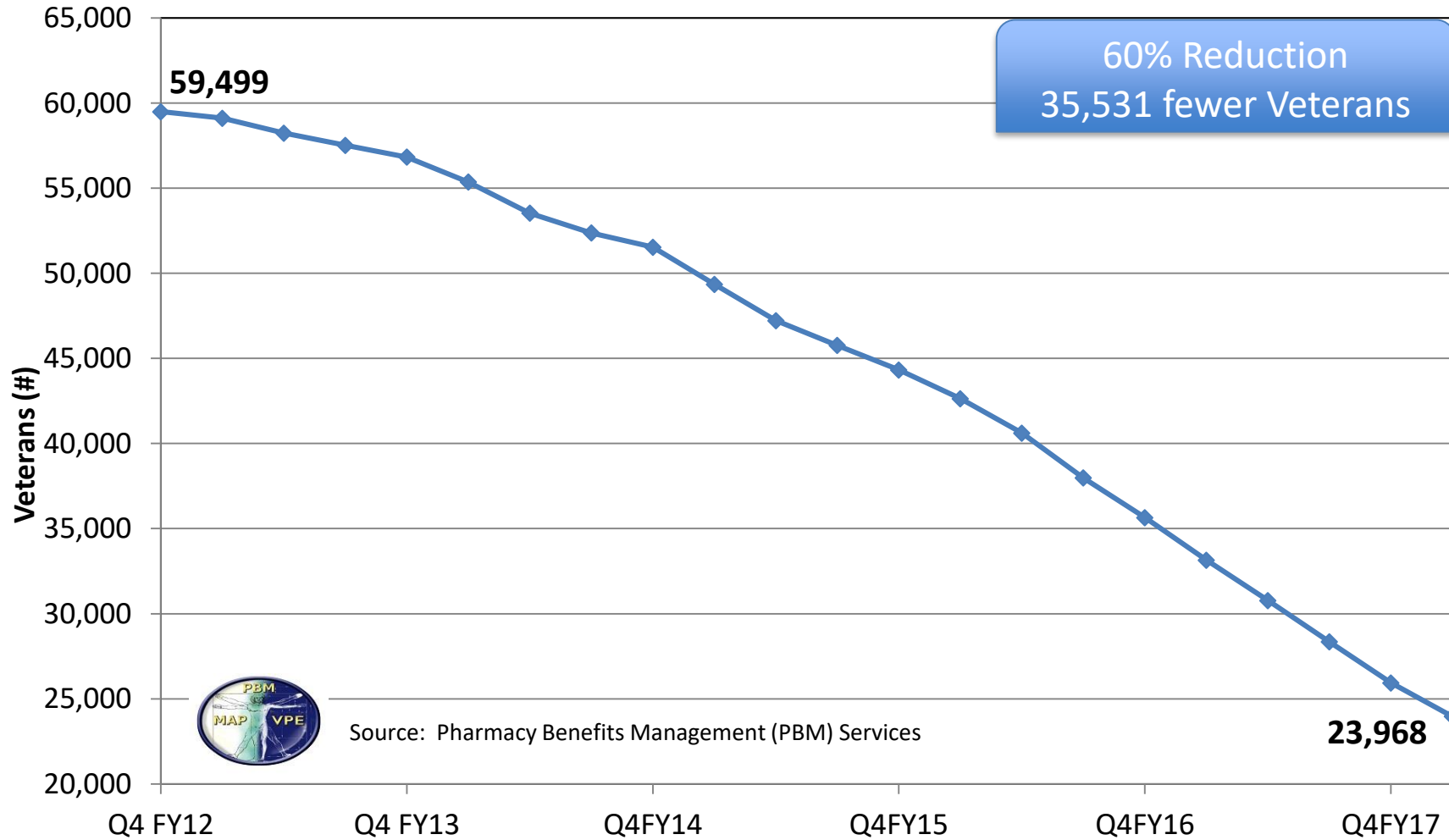


Veterans On Long-Term Opioid Therapy





Veterans Dispensed Greater Than Or Equal to 100 MEDD*



*MEDD = Morphine Equivalent Daily Dose