

## **Prescribe Safe**

### **Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula – Monterey, CA**

#### **Background**

From 1997 to 2007, the milligram per person use of prescription opioids in the United States increased from 74 milligrams to 369 milligrams, an increase of 402 percent. It is estimated that more than 700,000 emergency department (ED) visits per year are related to prescription drug misuse alone. Prescription drug-related deaths exceed motor vehicle-related deaths in 29 states, Washington, D.C., and Monterey County.

#### **Program Overview**

Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula (CHOMP) has taken the lead in addressing prescription medication misuse, abuse and diversion by bringing together more than a dozen organizations to create the Monterey County Prescribe Safe Initiative. Modeled after the San Diego Collaborative, Prescribe safe includes all four county hospitals – Community Hospital, Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System, Natividad Medical Center, and Mee Memorial – in addition to most of the county urgent-care facilities (Doctors on Duty and Monterey Bay Urgent Care); the Monterey County district attorney, coroner, public health and clinics, and sheriff's departments; the Hospital Council of Northern and Southern California; and the Monterey County Medical Society.

Prescribe Safe is meant to guide, educate, and provide resources for local physicians and patients in the safe use of prescription medications, as well as promote safe and effective pain management in Monterey County.

One component of the initiative is the ED Recurrent Visitor Program. Its purpose is to meet the needs and improve the overall care of patients recurrently seeking care in the ED for chronic medical problems, including, but certainly not limited to, opiate or benzodiazepine addiction. This is accomplished by applying care management concepts: identifying and engaging recurrent visitors; removing barriers to more appropriate care; removing barriers to self-management; establishing a primary care physician or referral to a more appropriate specialist; addressing socioeconomic barriers to care and referring to community resources; engaging payers in the process; and applying evidence-based and safe standards of care.

#### **Impact**

Since its launch in February 2014, Prescribe Safe has:

- Established ED pain medication prescribing guidelines and collaterals followed by all Monterey County hospitals.
- Evolved a robust ED-based Care Management Program for recurrent visitors to the ED at CHOMP. Since the program's implementation, recurrent ED visits decreased by 59 percent.

- Established ambulatory care-based medication prescribing guidelines and collaterals followed by the large, organized physician practices in the community. They have documented 50 percent to 60 percent reduction in narcotic prescribing (also benzodiazepines).
- Launched a provider-oriented resource web page and provided continuing medical education.
- Authored scholarly articles.
- Increased provider awareness of suspected unlawful diversion, and cultivated provider relationships with law enforcement for reporting. Multiple convictions have resulted.
- Advocated at local, state and federal levels for the issue.
- Mentored other organizations in California through a collaborative sponsored by the California Healthcare Foundation.
- Sponsored annual National Medication Take-Back Day Events.

### **Lessons Learned**

The issue of controlled prescription medication misuse, abuse and diversion is complex and requires a community-wide approach to address. Appropriate prescribing and patient expectations of pain management, availability of addiction treatment and chronic pain management consultative resources, illegal distribution or resale of prescription medications, and community education about proper storage and destruction of prescription medication all must be addressed to have a sustainable impact in most communities. Hospitals should choose their approach based on existing resources in the communities they serve and identify opportunities to partner with other social service organizations.

### **Future Goals**

Program leaders plan to expand chronic pain medication management and addiction resources; oversee permanent countywide medication take-back receptacles; develop a public awareness campaign (safe use, safe storage and disposal); employ data management and analysis; and implement an ED information system.

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