

Strategies to Reduce the Demand for Prescription Drugs: Findings from the Research Literature

WEBINAR SUMMARY

Webinar Series: Preventing Prescription Drug Misuse: Prevention Strategies from the Research Literature (Part 1)

Date: April 13, 2017

The first in a three-part series, this webinar explores strategies for preventing prescription drug misuse that focus on reducing inappropriate demand for these drugs. Experts from the field describe the core components of these prevention strategies, including their potential advantages and disadvantages, and identify CAPT resources to support grantees in strategy selection and implementation.

The demand reduction strategies presented in the webinar are organized according to four categories: patient education, prescriber education, information dissemination campaigns, and social marketing campaigns. Each is summarized below.

PATIENT EDUCATION STRATEGIES

These strategies are designed to reduce prescription drug misuse by teaching patients about proper ways to use, store, and dispose of their medications. They may also involve increasing patient awareness of the risks and benefits of their medications, including the risk of overdose.

Typical elements of these strategies include:

- Training doctors and nurses on how to discuss the benefits and risks of prescription drugs at the time of prescribing and during follow-up visits
- Providing patients with written guidance on preventing misuse and overdose, often in the form of fliers, brochures, and online messages

Advantages:

- Relatively affordable and simple to implement
- Have the potential to reduce risk in both individual patients and those around them

Challenges:

- Small effect size
- Potentially require changes to the healthcare system
- Need to engage prescribers in order to be effective

PRESCRIBER EDUCATION STRATEGIES

These strategies involve teaching prescribers about the benefits and risks of prescribing opioids. This may involve providing information about best prescribing practices and guidelines, how and when to implement tracking and monitoring strategies, and/or alternative pain management strategies.

Delivery methods include:

- **Interactive education:** Uses interactive techniques such as role playing and case discussion to build prescribers' knowledge and skills and increase their comfort discussing opioid misuse and overdose risks
- **Audit and feedback:** Experts review a practitioner's current prescribing practices and provide feedback, including recommendations for improvement (if warranted)
- **Reminders:** Providers receive regular prompts, typically through a computer-based system, on recommended clinical best practices for treating inputted patient diagnoses
- **Academic detailing:** Providers receive a personal visit by a trained professional who provides one-on-one information about topics related to prescription drug misuse (for example, how to recognize a patient at risk of misuse, what prescriptions to not mix, how to talk to patients about misuse, alternatives to opioids)
- **Clinical practice guidelines:** Best prescribing practices developed by trusted organizations that are intended to reduce the potential for prescription drug misuse.

Advantages:

- Potentially cost-effective
- Potential to educate both prescribers and their patients

Challenges:

- Can be challenging to engage prescribers (both as an audience and as implementation partners)

INFORMATION DISSEMINATION CAMPAIGNS

These campaigns use mass media to raise public awareness of the risks associated with prescription drug misuse and promote the appropriate use of prescription drugs. These campaigns have the potential to increase the perception of harm, an important protective factor for preventing misuse.

While these types of campaigns typically target the general public, they can also be directed toward specific population segments, such as youth. Delivery methods vary by platform, including TV ads, radio ads, or social media (for brief messaging), or films, lectures, or interactive courses (for longer messaging).

Campaigns tend to be guided by three objectives: 1) warning people of their risks of prescription drug misuse, 2) empowering people to take action, and 3) providing support to connect individuals with interventions and resources in their communities.

Advantages:

- Easy to replicate
- Can reach large numbers of people
- Can raise awareness
- Familiar strategy for prevention practitioners

Challenges:

- Difficult to tailor a message to a specific segment of the population
- Difficult to measure effectiveness
- Can be costly, particularly as campaigns need to be extended for long periods of time to maintain positive effects

SOCIAL MARKETING CAMPAIGNS

These campaigns use techniques adapted from commercial marketing to encourage favorable and voluntary behavior change. Messages seek to influence community attitudes, norms, and behaviors related to prescription drug misuse, and to minimize the perceived negative consequences typically associated with behavior change.

Steps to implementing a social marketing campaign typically include:

- Identifying a target population, conducting audience research, and designing messages based on this research
- Testing the target population's response to the message (for example, via a focus group)
- Delivering the message repeatedly, using multiple communication channels

Advantages:

- Can be broad and reach large numbers of people or target specific populations
- Familiar strategy for prevention practitioners

Challenges:

- Requires intensive development
- Possible to have negative effects on the target populations
- Can be costly

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES

Other strategies focused on reducing demand include:

- **Abuse-Deterrent Drug Formulations:** These are physical or pharmacological alterations developed by drug manufacturers to inhibit the abusive properties of prescription drugs.
- **Direct-to-Consumer Advertising Restrictions:** These are regulations to ensure that advertisements for prescription drugs are accurate and present both the benefits and risks of the medication.

CAPT RESOURCES

SAMHSA's CAPT has developed a selection of resources on strategies to prevent prescription drug misuse and opioid overdose. These are available to the public on www.samhsa.gov/capt/. Examples include:

- **Preventing Prescription Drug Misuse: Overview of Factors and Strategies**. Presents key findings from a review of current research on NMUPD, including a summary of risk and protective factors associated with prescription drug misuse, and programs and strategies that have been shown to be effective in addressing these factors.
- **Preventing Prescription Drug Misuse: Understanding Who Is at Risk**. Summarizes information from cross-sectional and longitudinal studies on factors that have been shown to either increase risk of or protect against NMUPD, based on articles published between 2006 and 2012.
- **Preventing Prescription Drug Misuse: Programs and Strategies**. Provides brief summaries of prevention strategies and associated programs that have been evaluated to determine their effects on NMUPD, including an overview of the relevant literature, descriptions of individual studies, and guidelines for using this information to inform prevention planning efforts.