

Strategies to Reduce the Supply of Prescription Drugs: Findings from the Research Literature

WEBINAR SUMMARY

Webinar Series: Preventing Prescription Drug Misuse: Prevention Strategies from the Research Literature (Part 2)

Date: April 27, 2017

The second in a three-part series, this webinar explores strategies aimed at decreasing the availability and diversion of prescription drugs for non-medical use (that is, that to reduce supply). Experts from the field describe the core components of these strategies, explore potential advantages and disadvantages, and identify CAPT resources to support grantees with their strategy selection and implementation.

Strategies presented in the webinar are organized according to five categories: prescriber education, tracking and monitoring, retail access restriction, enforcement, and storage and disposal. Each is summarized below.

PRESCRIBER EDUCATION STRATEGIES

These strategies involve teaching appropriate opioid-prescribing practices, including how and when to implement tracking and monitoring strategies, steps to take if a patient is at risk, and how and when to prescribe opioids for non-cancer pain.

Advantages:

- Cost-effective
- Can reduce both supply and demand for prescription drugs
- Can provide an opportunity to inform prescribers about the newest and best prescribing practices
- Often supported by legislation

Challenges:

- Target population can be difficult to reach
- Need medical expertise for implementation
- Level of effectiveness depends on adoption by all prescribers and pharmacists

TRACKING AND MONITORING STRATEGIES

These strategies help law enforcement and regulatory agencies detect patients and prescribers who may be engaging in behaviors, either knowingly or unknowingly, that can increase the risk for prescription drug misuse. Strategies include:

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- Using Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) data to target prevention efforts (for example, to identify “hotspots”) and change prescriber behaviors (for example, by generating “prescriber report cards”)
- Implementing prescriber and patient requirements, such as requiring prescribers to see patients receiving pain management care more regularly, and requiring patients to provide identification prior to picking up their prescriptions

Advantages:

- Prescriber and patient requirements are easy to implement and create opportunities for prescribers to detect risk factors for drug dependence and monitor patient’s drug use

Challenges:

- Access to PDMP data can be restricted to certain individuals and organizations
- Requirements may slow down or prevent access to opioids for patients with a medical need for these drugs
- May deter prescribers from prescribing prescription opioids when justifiable
- More effective when used by all prescribers and pharmacists

RETAIL ACCESS RESTRICTION STRATEGIES

These strategies involve regulations enacted by federal laws, state laws, or health insurance companies that limit access to commonly misused prescription drugs. Strategies include:

- Patient review and restrictions (“lock-in” programs) that enable insurers to restrict patients suspected of prescription drug misuse to a single designated provider and/or pharmacy
- “Doctor shopping” laws, which target patients who obtain multiple prescriptions for controlled substances from multiple prescribers or pharmacies without disclosing their other prescriptions
- Restricting internet access to prescription drugs, which involves instituting laws and policies that place limits on online pharmacies, including restrictions on the sale and purchase of controlled drugs

Advantages:

- Reduces the risk of drug diversion for non-medical use

Challenges:

- Can become too restrictive, denying patients access to drugs they need
- Requires buy-in from insurance providers and policy makers

ENFORCEMENT STRATEGIES

These strategies rely on the support of law enforcement personnel to enforce laws and regulations intended to reduce prescription drug misuse. Strategies include:

- Preparing law enforcement officers to recognize and reduce the availability of illicit drugs and diverted legal substances, including prescription drugs

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- Initiatives to shut down “pill mills” (healthcare practices that offer large quantities of unnecessary prescriptions for monetary gain) by, for example, implementing regulations for pain clinics, having law enforcement conduct raids, enacting limitations on the amount of prescriptions that can be sold, and mandating all pain clinics participate in PMDPs to track and record prescriptions.

Advantages:

- Practitioners may have existing relationships with law enforcement that facilitate engagement and buy-in from key partners

Challenges:

- Without existing relationships, these strategies may not be effective

STORAGE AND DISPOSAL STRATEGIES

These strategies provide safe and responsible ways for people to store and dispose of prescription drugs kept in their homes. These strategies focus on limiting social access to prescription drugs and helping to ensure that drugs legitimately prescribed are not later diverted. Strategies include:

- Take-back programs to collect unwanted or expired drugs voluntarily through drop boxes, mail-back programs, or events
- Proper medication storage strategies to educate individuals on how to safely keep medications in their homes to avoid diversion or accidental poisonings; methods can range from developing pamphlets to large events targeting certain individuals (for example, family night at local schools)

Advantages:

- Cost-effective and easy to implement
- Raise awareness of prescription drug misuse
- Prevent accidental poisonings
- Help to protect the environment

Challenges:

- Most of the prescription drugs collected are not controlled drugs
- Not effective for individuals who have already developed drug dependence

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES FOCUSED ON USE

Although prevention practitioners may not be directly involved, the following strategies also focus on reducing the prescription drug supply:

- **Model Pain Clinic Regulations**, designed to prevent facilities from prescribing controlled substances indiscriminately or inappropriately
- **Drug Enforcement Administration Regulations**, which regulate and enforce laws at the federal level
- **Delisting Prescription Drugs**: the process of removing a specific drug from a public or private insurance plan, rendering it no longer covered for enrollees

CAPT RESOURCES

SAMHSA's CAPT has a wide selection of resources on strategies to prevent prescription drug misuse and opioid overdose 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.