



AmeriHealth Caritas
District of Columbia

To: AmeriHealth Caritas DC Dental Providers
Date: June 6, 2017
Subject: **The Rising Rates of Opioid Addiction and Misuse**

Summary: AmeriHealth Caritas District of Columbia (DC) wants to educate providers about the rising rates of opioid addiction and misuse.

Impact

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports overdoses from prescription opioids are a driving factor in the 15-year increase in opioid overdose deaths. Since 1999, the number of prescription opioids sold in the United States has nearly quadrupled, yet there has not been an overall change in the amount of pain that Americans report. Death rates from prescription opioids — drugs like oxycodone, hydrocodone, and methadone — have more than quadrupled since 1999.

Action needed

- When considering prescribing opioids, dentists should conduct medical and dental histories to determine current medications, potential drug interactions, and patterns of substance use.
- Dentists should follow and continually review CDC and state licensing board recommendations for safe opioid prescribing.
- Dentists should register with and utilize the prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP) to promote the appropriate use of controlled substances for legitimate medical purposes, while deterring the misuse, abuse, and diversion of these substances.
- Dentists should have discussions with patients regarding their responsibility for preventing misuse and abuse of prescription opioids, as well as how to store and dispose of these drugs.
- Dentists should consider treatment options that utilize best practices to prevent exacerbation of or relapse into opioid misuse.
- Dentists should consider nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory analgesics as first-line therapy for acute pain management.
- Dentists should recognize multimodal pain strategies for managing acute postoperative pain to avoid the need for opioid analgesics.
- Dentists should consider coordinating with other treating providers, including pain specialists, when prescribing opioids for managing chronic orofacial pain.
- Dental students, residents, and practicing dentists are encouraged to seek continuing education in addictive disease and pain management as related to opioid prescribing.

Questions

If you have any questions about this communication, please contact Nathan Fletcher, DDS, Dental Director at 202-408-3965.