

Pharmacy Benefit News

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Specialty Spotlight

Opioid Dangers – Do Doctors and Patients Care?

“A new Medscape survey has found that 74% of health professionals are very concerned about the increased abuse or misuse of opioid analgesics. Only about half of these professionals, however, discuss safe storage and proper disposal of opioids with their patients. A survey by WebMD found that 42% of consumer respondents said they kept unused opioid tablets for future use. Most survey respondents who had recently used an opioid analgesic said they had tried other methods first, such as OTC medications or alternative medicines; but only about 26% said these were effective. Many health professionals also reported that they suggest alternatives to opioids for their patients.”

Medscape (12/30/15) Anderson, Pauline

COMMENT:

Surveys are helpful, but more are more useful and of value when they target the primary driver(s) of a problem. One might say, that a survey which is focused on storage, disposal and alternatives, may not be targeting the primary problem.

I will posit the following which is that the real drivers are well known without the need to survey. When we target appropriate use, risk for misuse and prescribers who are mis-prescribing opiates, then we are focusing on areas which are actionable.

[Find out more](#)

Opiate Addiction – Are Pharmacists the Last Line of Defense?

Allergan & Perrigo Launch Store-Brand Expectorant and Nasal Decongestant

At recent Prescription Drug Awareness Conferences in Pittsburgh, the DEA called for pharmacists and soon-to-be pharmacy school graduates to tighten controls over prescription opioids. "You are often going to be the last line of defense for us," said Gary Tuggle, the DEA special agent in charge. He said that pharmacists who encounter addicts with illegitimate prescriptions should take a stand and not second-guess their instincts.

Pharmacists also may discuss the issue of analgesics and addiction with patients, or even inform on prescribers who write opioid prescriptions too freely. Some pharmacists attending the conference pointed out that corporate executives often pressure them to move more medications, and encourage them to call customers at refill time to ask if they need anything else. Adam Dashner, a sixth-year student pharmacist at Duquesne University and a conference attendee, noted that refusing to fill a prescription may provide greater value to the patient and the community than filling a profitable prescription.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette (12/15/15) Lord, Rich

Commentary

The conflict between commerce and the right thing to do are old arguments. The real conflict is between the traditional role of pharmacists and their new roles based on provider responsibility. Since pharmacists are paid for filling and not for counseling, commerce wins out at the present time. The group that provides a viable argument for patient responsibility versus profit will win this conflict. My Dad taught me that keeping customers is every bit as important as making one sale. The right argument may cause the loss of an addicted patient.

The product provides consumers with a less expensive alternative to Reckitt Benckiser's Mucinex D extended-release product. Perrigo also plans to introduce five other products in 2016.

Chain Drug Review (01/04/16)

Commentary

It is interesting that old products like Guaifenesin, Dextromethorphan and Pseudoephedrine are constantly being re-introduced in new forms. The main difference here is the strength. Higher doses produce more response.

Generics chase brand profits. With drug pricing rising for prescription medications, OTCs are a more affordable alternative and an attractive alternative to seeking medical care.

The European, Latin American and Asian countries seek OTC, herbal, homeopathic and other alternatives, more so than seeking medical care for common ailments. Americans have always used these alternatives to some degree. Are we now seeing the tip of the movement to self-care over medical care to avoid expensive copays?



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