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Does Opioid Pain Management Prescribing Impact the Opioid Epidemic?

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Opioid-pain-medications overdoses have been increasing since 1999 to the point of being an epidemic. This has led the President of the United States to declare the opioid epidemic a public health emergency. This public health emergency is related to the fact that deaths from drug overdoses have become the leading cause of preventable death in the United States from injuries, exceeding deaths from motor vehicle accidents. This paper aims at 1) establishing the link between the current opioid epidemic and the contributing role of the prescribing practice; 2) increasing awareness of the potential effects of inappropriate prescribing and opening new horizons; 3) issuing a call for standardized national pain-management guidelines which would help prescribers obtain the best positive health results; and 4) demonstrating that inappropriate prescribing not only harms the patient but also increases costs which place financial burdens on our healthcare systems. The economic burden which is also growing annually has become unmanageable.

Providers in the United States (US) have pain-management guidelines which, however, are not nationally applied. Vast differences exist in the interpretation and/or application of those guidelines. Apparently, the effects of social-norm related prescribing are still not fully understood. The American Academy of Pain Management (AAPM) maintains that, because the treatment of pain varies from one prescriber to the other, it has sometimes led to both under and overprescribing. In an attempt to remedy this situation, AAPM has proposed, for its members and colleagues, pain-management practice guidelines based on new evidence, finding and concepts about pain, pain assessment and its treatment. The overuse of opioids in the United States could be a result of physician prescribing practices. However, the individual physicians prescribing practice has not been studied extensively. The ramifications on long term outcomes is also unknown.

Biography:

Marc Aube is a full-time Registered Nurse and graduate student at Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Science. After working many years as a phlebotomist, his wife and three children encouraged him to follow his "nursing" dream. Marc, while maintaining full-time employment, pursued an Associate Degree followed by a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. Finally, Marc pursued his life-long goal of Master's level nursing. In his practice, the opioid epidemic awakened his need to be part of the solution to this crisis.