Ministry Medical Group: Managing Pain, Improving Lives

Ministry Medical Group is adopting the Wisconsin Medical Examining Board (MEB) Opioid Prescribing Guideline as the framework for prescribing opioid analgesics for chronic non-cancer pain. This guideline applies to all primary care providers and specialists who prescribe opioid analgesics to adult patients (> 18 years) for the management of chronic non-cancer pain. This guideline does not apply to patients who are in active cancer treatment, palliative care, or at end-of-life.

Please take a few minutes to respond to a short SURVEY to help us better understand current practice and plan upcoming education programs.

A Patient’s Story:

“Trying to get pain under control is hard. When you are on narcotics, you are often treated like a second-class citizen, a drug-seeker. One of the most disappointing things about having pain is the feeling of being judged, as if any normal person would want pain or to have the need to take pain medicine. It is important to treat pain acutely, and recognize how much psychological and emotional pain there is in that situation. Having a caring provider definitely is good for the soul of the patient, which in turn helps with pain and anxiety that come with chronic pain.”

In addition to adopting the MEB Guideline, we will be implementing evidence-based strategies aimed at improving the assessment and management of chronic pain. The key to managing pain, improving lives is shifting from a treatment model focused largely on pharmacologic management to a model that is person-centered, which addresses the complex biopsychosocial needs in a multidimensional approach.

Why pain guidelines? Why now?

- The risks to providers and patients have never been greater. The nation-wide opioid crisis has created concern on both ends of the spectrum, from overprescribing of opioids and the risk of overdose and death to a fear of opioid restriction and under treatment of pain.
- The time is right to address these concerns. Public awareness about the risks of opioids is high; providers want guidance on how to better manage chronic pain;
- There is legislative push to address the prescription opioid crisis; and
- Ascension Wisconsin and Ascension Medical Group leadership support the need to change practice.

Data on opioid prescribing practices within Ministry Medical Group demonstrates a need for improvement:

- 30% of patients prescribed opioids are also prescribed benzodiazepines,
- Less than 20% of patients prescribed opioids have medication treatment agreements, and
- Only 10% of patients receiving opioids had a urine drug screen in the past year.

Implementing the MEB opioid prescribing guideline is an important step towards achieving balance between the appropriate management of pain and responsible analgesic prescribing, while minimizing the risk of opioid abuse and misuse.
STAY TUNED for weekly updates on various components of the guideline, support tools, and more specific information on select pain management topics.

For questions, contact Peggy Lutz, Service Line Director, Pain Management peggy.lutz@ascension.org or Robert Sedlacek, MD, Family Medicine, Merrill robert.sedlacek@ascension.org