Screening for Addiction and Monitoring for Aberrant Behavior in Patients with Chronic Pain

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Objectives

• Define and distinguish the concepts of addiction, substance abuse, dependence and pseudoaddiction.
• Identify epidemiological and clinical risk factors for aberrant behavior in populations with chronic pain.
• Demonstrate the ability to use clinical tools to assess risk of addiction.
• Develop practical strategies to manage aberrant behavior.
The Case of Mr. F

• Mr. F. is a 36-year old fire-fighter who hurt his back both in the service 6-years ago reinjured on the job. Currently he is trying to get medical retirement from the fire department.

• MRI shows one bulging disk at L5-S1 and on physical examination there are spasms in the lumbar area and limited forward bend. Straight leg raise is negative.
Daniel P. Alford, MD, MPH, FACP, FASAM, opioid expert and associate professor of medicine at BU:

“A controversial statement follows…

I strongly believe that physicians can be trained to prescribe opioids for chronic pain safely and effectively.”
Framework for opioid risk management

- Be familiar with individual risk factors for opioid abuse
- Use risk assessment tools
- Monitor for aberrant behaviors

Responsible Prescribing
ASAM Definition of Addiction

- A primary, chronic disease of brain reward, motivation, memory and related circuitry.
- Dysfunction in these circuits leads to characteristic biological, psychological, social, and spiritual manifestations.
- This is reflected in an individual pathologically pursuing reward and/or relief by substance use and other behaviors.

Aberrant Behavior is behavior that suggests prescription misuse, abuse, or addiction. (SAMSHA TIP 54)

“Prescribing opioids will lead to abuse/addiction in a small percentage of chronic pain patients, but a larger percentage will demonstrate aberrant drug related behaviors and illicit drug use. These percentages appear to be much less if CPPs are preselected for the absence of a current or past history of alcohol/illicit drug use or abuse/addiction.” (Fishbain et al.)
Prevalence of Addiction in Chronic Pain Patients

• Structured review of available studies of development of aberrant behavior/addiction in patients on opioids for chronic pain.

• 24 studies with 2,057 patients with rate of 3.27% for abuse/addiction.

• Rate of abuse/addiction in patients with no history or current use of substances was 0.19%
Aberrant Behavior Prevalence

- 17 studies of 2,466 chronic pain patients found rate of 11.5% for aberrant behavior.
- For patients without SUD, rate was 0.59%.
- 5 studies (15,542 patients) by urine toxicology: 20.4% had no Rx opioid or an opioid not prescribed.
- 5 studies (1,965 patients): 14.5% had illicit drugs.
Risk Factors for aberrant behavior

• Lifetime history of substance use disorder (alcohol, tobacco, illicit substances)
• Psychiatric co-morbidity
• History of pre-adolescent sexual abuse
• Family history of substance abuse
• History of legal problems
• Younger age (16 – 45)
• Increased functional impairment
Risk Factors Predictive of Dependence

- Analysis of electronic health records of outpatients receiving 4 or more prescriptions for opioids in last 12 month for chronic pain.
- Diagnostic interviews with 705 patients.
- Age < 65, pain impairment, major depressive disorder and use of psychotropic medications had a combined OR of 8.
- Adding history of opioid abuse or severe dependence raised OR to 56.
Risk Factors Mr. F

• Mr. F claims he can no longer work as a fire fighter because he cannot lift or sit for more than 30 minutes.

• He reports drinking 4-beers a night but your concerned he actually drinking more. He scores positive on a depression screen and says he drinks more when depressed.

• In the past he has obtained oxycdone from friends workmen’s comp MD and presents to your clinic asking for his own prescription.
Spectrum of Aberrant Behaviors: *mild*

- Requests for higher doses
- Requests for specific drugs
- Occasional loss of prescription
- Occasional increase of dose without permission
- Occasional early refills
Spectrum of Aberrant Behaviors: moderate

- Use of Rx to treat symptom other than pain
- Stockpiling Rx in time of reduced symptom
- Significant energy spent assuring supply
- Multiple unsanctioned dose escalations
- Recurrent prescription losses/early refills
- Decline in function from baseline
- Concurrent use of illicit substances
Spectrum of Aberrant Behaviors: severe

- Continual escalation of dose
- Seeking Rx from other providers or ER: multiple providers
- Stealing drugs
- Consistently buying Rx off street
  - Diverting/Selling Rx
  - Forging prescriptions
  - Injection of oral Rx
Risk Assessment Tools

- **SOAPP®-R**  
  Screener and Opioid Assessment for Patients with Pain  
  - 24 item patient reported mood sx, family history, legal history, designed to predict which pts require more monitoring, has associated monitoring/treatment recommendations.

- **DAST©**  
  Drug Addiction Screening Tool  
  - 28 item patient report on prescription use, substance use behaviors.

- **DIRE©**  
  - Clinician rated assessment of 4 domains: dx, intractability, risk, efficacy.

- **ORT©**  
  Opioid Risk Tool  
  - Patient reported personal and family hx substance abuse, age, psychiatric dx, age, hx sexual abuse. Stratifies into low, moderate, high risk.
Ongoing Risk Assessment Tool

- COMM (Chronic Opioid Misuse Measure)™
  - 17 item patient self-reported medication use behaviors over previous 30 days
  - Score of 9 or above has positive LR 3.48 and negative LR 0.08 for medication misuse

All cited risk tools are available online:

http://www.painedu.org
http://www.emergingsolutionsinpain.com
How to use risk assessment tools

• Should not be used to deprive patients of pain management or opioid therapy but to identify those who are at risk for addiction.

• Use only with informed consent with advisement that refusal may for safety reasons alter treatment plan.

• They should be used to help guide us to determine the frequency and intensity of monitoring during the course of treatment.

• They should be use to develop the most efficacious and safest treatment strategy.
Balancing Benefits/Risks

• There are no absolute rules: ongoing analysis of risk/benefit balance in each individual case.
• Involve patient in process of shared decision-making and mutual rights and responsibilities.
• Document your reasoning for continued use based on function and lack of side effects.
• Obtain early and frequent consultation for challenging cases and problem behaviors.
How Do You Respond to Mr. F?

• Response 1: Don’t prescribe opioids at all and try to manage pain with non-pharmacological means.
• Response 2: Prescribe adjunctive medications for depression and pain.
• Response 3: If the patient signs an opioid agreement, consents to a UA and PMP, and agrees to stop drinking, prescribe oxycodone 10 mg q 8 hrs at next visit.
Judge the Treatment NOT the Patient

Do the benefits of this treatment outweigh any side effects and risks of harm to the patient or society?

Is the patient good or bad?
Does the patient deserve pain meds?
Should I trust the patient?
Should he/she be punished or rewarded?

Adapted from Alford
Balancing Benefits/Harms

Harms
- Risk of Addiction
- Costs to Society
- Side Effects

Benefits
- Pain Relief
- Improved Function
- Ability to return to work
Balancing Benefits/Risks

• Clinical interview and judgment are still the gold standard of risk assessment/management.
• Patients with addiction less likely to use illicit drugs if painful conditions controlled.
• Less risk of developing other addiction-related diseases (HIV, Hep C, syphilis) due to IV drug use.
Management of Risk

- UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS: every patient is potentially at risk
  - Opioid agreements
  - Risk screening and ongoing assessment
  - Monitoring of urine toxicology
  - Prescription monitoring programs
  - Pill counts for those at high risk
  - Frequent visits with limited number of pills dispensed for those at high risk
Mr. F Returns

- Mr. F returns 2-weeks later: PMP and UA are negative.
- He self-reports he has cut down on his drinking and agrees to trial of SNRI antidepressant.
- Mr. F refuses PT but says a friend who is trainer is working out with him.
- You prescribe oxycodone 10 mg q 8 hrs and schedule follow up in 1 month.
Management of Risk: Opioid Agreements

• Mainly a tool to communicate expectations of both provider and patient.
• A means of obtaining informed consent.
• Educate patient on rationale, risks/benefits.
• Set specific goals (functional).
• Set expectations for monitoring.
• Identify specific responses for aberrant behaviors.
Management of Risk: Urine Toxicology

- Always obtain informed consent.
- Use results therapeutically.
- Know the limitations of toxicology screens.
- A tool for assessing adherence with medical treatment plan just like checking blood sugar in diabetes.
  - Main utility of standard toxicology is to identify use of illicit substances
- Adjust frequency of monitoring to match level of risk.
Managing Aberrant Behavior within the Practitioner-Patient Relationship

• Medicalize, don’t stigmatize the non-adherence, as with any other disease such as diabetes.
• Ask and try to empathically understand the reasons for the behavior.
• Be open and non-judgmental regarding the explanation even if you don’t believe it.
Mr. F on Follow Up

- 1 month later Mr. F comes for follow-up visit.
- He has not overtaken the oxycodone or requested an early refill.
- Labs support reduced drinking.
- Mr. F states he is less depressed with the antidepressant and has been a little more active.
- He requests a higher dose of oxycodone as his pain is still not controlled sufficiently for him to exercise, do you raise the dose?
Questions For Patient and Practitioner

• Patient
  • Were you confused about how to take the prescription?
  • Did you think more pills, more relief?
  • Were you overly active and then have more pain & take more?
  • Have you been depressed or anxious and the drugs made you feel better?

• Practitioner
  • Has the pain condition progressed?
  • Is there a new pain generator?
  • Is there an undiagnosed psychiatric disorder needing treatment?
  • Have you set and followed limits and rules?
  • (SAMSHA TIP 54)
Therapeutic Responses to Mild/Moderate Aberrant Behaviors

- Increase frequency of visits, even if brief check ins with nursing staff.
- With permission, obtain collateral information/family support for plan.
- Increase frequency or sophistication of toxicology screening, e.g., test for alcohol.
- Provide smaller quantities of opioids and other controlled substances.
When to Taper Opioids

• Moderate-severe aberrant behavior that continues despite repeated warnings and implementation of more close monitoring.
• Humane, long taper if can be safely done.
• Begin alternative pharmacological and non-pharmacological treatments for pain.
• DO NOT abandon the patient even if you refer.
When to stop opioids

- Patients exhibit aberrant behaviors in the severe category and represent a danger to the patient and the public.
- Danger such that may not allow humane tapering.
  - Injection of oral medication
  - Selling prescription
  - Forging/stealing prescription
  - Overdoses
When to refer to an addiction expert

• Aggressive demands for medications.
• Forging or stealing prescriptions.
• Selling or diverting medications
• Obtaining drugs from multiple prescribers
• Injecting oral/topical medications

Adapted from NY State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services: Clinical Practice Guidance Number 2012.2: Referral to a Pain or Addiction Specialist. Available at http://www.oasas.ny.gov/AdMed/recommend/guide2ref.cfm
When to refer to pain expert

- Uncertain or questions about whether to use opioids to treat chronic pain.
- Patient with multiple psychiatric and medical comorbidities who needs opioids chronically.
- Complexity and risk profile of patient requires a level of documentation and monitoring not available in the practice setting.
- Intensity of pain & disability requires other pain interventions.
Mr. F is Waiting

• Increase the oxycodone as has made some progress.
• Taper the oxycodone as Mr. F is displaying aberrant behavior.
• Refer to a pain specialist
• Refer to an addiction expert
Summary

• The management of chronic pain with opioids is challenging and rewarding.
• Practitioner’s responsibility is to provide:
  • Evidence-based risk assessment
  • Individualized treatment plan
  • Ongoing monitoring of functioning, adherence, impairment, and psychiatric symptoms.
  • Responsible prescribing.