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Prescription Drug Abuse

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Overview

What is Prescription Drug Abuse?

- Some medications have mind-altering effects that lend themselves to be more likely to be abused
- Prescription drugs can be abused in multiple ways:
 1. Using a medication that is not prescribed to you
 2. Taking a drug in a higher dosage or different form than originally prescribed
 3. Taking a drug for a different reason than prescribed
- Most commonly abused drug categories
 1. Pain relievers
 2. Stimulants
 3. Anxiety relievers that affect the central nervous system

Importance of the Issue

- Many prescription drug abuses receive the drug from a relative or friend
 - Important for prevention
- More people die yearly from overdoses on prescription opioids than any other drugs combined

Health Impact

- Effects of Abuse and Overdoses
 - Opioids can lead to brain damage
 - Stimulants can impair the cardiovascular system
 - All have potential for addiction, and overdoses can lead to death
 - Prescription drug abuse can lead to the use of illicit drugs
 - Ex: Opioids -> heroin
- ("Drug Facts: Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications", 2014)



Contributors to Prescription Drug Abuse

Biggest Contributors

- Individual behavior choices
People may choose to take their prescribed drugs appropriately or they may choose to abuse them in the 3 ways mentioned in the overview
- Social Factors
70% of people that abused or misused drugs got them from a friend or relative ("Drug Facts: Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications," 2014)

Example: Students may obtain Adderall from someone in their social environment to improve their academic performance (stressful environment makes it more tempting for them)

Indicators

Main Indicators:

- Demand for drug treatment
- Drug treatment medication prescribed/dispensed
- Financial status
- Access to treatment
- Access to Medicaid
- Treatment program availability
- Number of physicians involved in treatment
- Rates of death
- Rates of disease
- Rates of infectious diseases
- Rates of crime
- Mean Drug Sales

Other Indicators Used:

- Cluster Analysis
- Doctor-Shopping Indicator
- Other societal factors
 - Ex: Study of homeless men

Impacts of Prescription Drug Abuse

- 52 million people in the United States have abused a prescription drug in some way (Collins, 2015)
- Overdoses from prescription drugs cause more than a million emergency room visits per year and cause more deaths than car accidents
- Children are more likely to develop drug addictions or mental illness if parents are addicted and also more likely to be abused or neglected
- The cost of prescription drug abuse in 2006 was \$53.4 billion (Hansen, 2011)

Specific Role and Impact in Pharmacy

- Pharmacists play a direct role in fighting prescription drug abuse because they are involved in making policy about regulation and prescribing methods of prescription drugs as well as patient education
- According to the DEA, pharmacists are required to ensure a prescription for a controlled substance is legitimate (Collins, 2015)
- Pharmacists can stop drug abuse by refusing to fill a prescription, counseling a patient, or referring a patient for treatment

Recommendations to Reduce Problem

- Make better use of prescription drug monitoring programs
- Make sure pharmacists and prescribers are using real time tools for prescription histories that are current up to the minute they are entered (this will help identify "doctor shopping")
- Raise awareness of prescription drug abuse by educating parents, youth, patients, and even healthcare providers about the dangers of prescription drugs



This QR code links to a webpage which has differing facts concerning the overview on prescription drug abuse, particularly in teenagers.



Link to a short video about the prescription drug abuse epidemic.

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