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Opioid Addiction Prevention

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Preventing opioid addiction is a critical public health goal, as the consequences of addiction can be devastating.
- Opioid addiction prevention efforts should **target multiple levels of society**, from (1) **individuals and families** to (2) **healthcare providers** and (3) **policymakers**. Here are some strategies for preventing opioid addiction:

1. PUBLIC EDUCATION AND AWARENESS:

- Educate the public about the risks of opioid use and the potential for addiction. This includes awareness campaigns about the **dangers of prescription opioids**, the risks of non-medical opioid use, and the consequences of opioid addiction.
- Promote **responsible medication use** and proper storage and disposal of prescription opioids to reduce the availability of unused drugs.
- Encourage **open discussions** about addiction within families and communities.

2. SAFE PRESCRIBING PRACTICES:

- Healthcare providers should follow guidelines for safe and responsible opioid prescribing, such as **limiting the duration and dosage** of prescriptions.
- Evaluate **non-opioid pain management options** before prescribing opioids.
- Use prescription **drug monitoring programs** to track patients' opioid prescriptions and detect potential misuse.

3. SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT:

- Healthcare providers should screen patients for a **history of substance use disorders** and assess their risk of opioid addiction before prescribing opioids.
- Identify individuals at higher risk for addiction, such as those with a **history of addiction** or mental health issues.

4. ALTERNATIVE PAIN MANAGEMENT:

- Promote **non-opioid pain management approaches**, including physical therapy, exercise, acupuncture, and cognitive-behavioral therapy.
- Support research into **non-addictive pain medications** and treatments.

5. ACCESS TO TREATMENT AND SUPPORT:

- Ensure that individuals with pain management needs have **access to appropriate treatment** for substance use disorders.
- Expand the availability of **medication-assisted treatment (MAT)** and recovery services.
- Support the integration of addiction treatment into **primary care settings**.

6. HARM REDUCTION:

- Implement harm reduction strategies, such as needle exchange programs and the **distribution of naloxone** (Narcan) to reverse opioid overdoses.
- Encourage the use of **supervised injection facilities** to reduce the risk of overdose and infectious diseases.

7. EARLY INTERVENTION:

- Identify and intervene with at-risk individuals, such as **adolescents experimenting** with opioids or those with a family history of addiction.
- Provide **school-based prevention programs** that educate young people about the risks of opioid use.

8. POLICIES AND REGULATION:

- Implement and enforce policies to **restrict the marketing** and promotion of opioids.
- Ensure **robust regulation** of pharmaceutical companies to prevent overproduction and distribution of prescription opioids.
- Advocate for **stricter penalties** for the illegal distribution of opioids.

9. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:

- Encourage **community organizations**, schools, and healthcare providers to work together to prevent opioid addiction.
- Establish **community coalitions** that focus on substance use prevention.

10. RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION:

- **Support research** to better understand the causes of addiction and effective prevention strategies.
- Use data to **monitor opioid prescribing** patterns and identify areas of concern.
- Preventing opioid addiction requires a **multifaceted approach** that involves collaboration between healthcare providers, policymakers, educators, and the community.
- By implementing these strategies, it is possible to **reduce the incidence** of opioid addiction and its associated harms.



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