

Fighting the Opioid Crisis

[VIDEO TRANSCRIPT]

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Hello, this is doctor Anne Dabrow Woods and I'm the chief nurse of Wolters Kluwer health learning research and practice and this is from the desk of the chief nurse. Today let's talk about the opioid crisis here in the United States. Every day 90 Americans die from overdosing on opioids. Think about that 90 Americans a day are dying because of that. In 2015 alone, 33,000 Americans died as a result of opioid Overdose. And these drugs that they're taking includes such things as prescription pain relievers, heroin, and also synthetic opioids. The drug crisis, the opioid crisis has put a huge economic burden in the US and according to the Centers for Disease Control it's estimated that it costs the country 78.5 billion dollars a year in costs and these costs include burden from health care, burden from loss of productivity in the workplace, addiction treatment, and criminal justice involvement. Let's take a look at some other startling statistics. 21 to 29 percent of patients prescribed opioid medications for chronic pain actually misuse them. And between 8 to 12 percent of these people develop an opioid use disorder. And what's even more frightening is that 80% of people who use heroin today started out by taking a prescription opioid first. That's just unacceptable in today's standards. So what is this country doing about it? Well there are some things that are happening right now that I want to make you aware of and one of them starts with the Department of Health and Human Services and they have a plan in place to improve access to medication assisted treatment programs. This is hugely important, we need to make sure we can get patients into treatment if they do have an opioid problem. The Department of Health and Human Services also promotes the use of overdose reversing agents such as naloxone, Narcan, and it should be freely available to everyone who needs it including our first responders, the police, and all of us here in healthcare settings. They also suggest that we really strengthen our understanding of the epidemic

through better public health initiatives and surveillance and really provide a lot of research support so that this research can be done and funded on how do we really manage pain differently and how do we manage addiction differently? And also, they want to invest in advancing better practices for pain management. But it doesn't stop there. The National Institute of Health is exploring partnerships not only with pharmaceutical companies but with academic centers to do additional research on ways to look at developing drugs that cause less addiction as well as finding better ways to treat pain in patients who are experiencing it. Also they're looking at developing new and innovative medication and technologies to treat opioid use disorders. And in addition, they are looking to improve overdose prevention and reversal interventions to save the lives and support recovery. What can we as nurses in advanced practice do to help in this opioid crisis? The first thing we can do is become educated. We can take continuing education and professional development courses on how to help patients manage their pain better and we here at Wolters Kluwer have many courses that will help you do that. We also need to be thinking about innovative ways to help patients manage their pain. Those are things like: is it truly pain their patient is experiencing or is it anxiety? And that's what we should be managing. Is there a way we can reposition the patient differently? Is there an option to bring in interdisciplinary groups to help us manage our patients pain more effectively such as bringing in physical therapy, occupational therapy? And then if you are a prescriber, an advanced practice nurse, you need to think about being a responsible prescriber every time you write a prescription and especially for opioids. And making sure that you checked the prescription drug monitoring program database before you write that prescription. We certainly don't want someone in the federal government telling us what we can prescribe and how much we can prescribe. It's really about our clinical judgment and what that patient needs. As nurses we need to make sure before we administer that pain medication to the patient, that we have chosen the right dose for the right level of pain. We also need to consider what a different drug, a non-opioid make better sense for our patient such as a drug like acetaminophen, ibuprofen, naproxen. And we also need to educate our patients that when they have a surgical procedure, or they have an acute injury, they are going to have

pain and a pain level of two to three it should be expected. They're not going to be pain-free and actually pain is a good thing to experience because it will help them protect their injury site. We also need to educate them on how to properly dispose of leftover opioid medications as well. And in the end, we as nurses are integral in helping manage this opioid crisis. Nurses are the biggest patient advocates around and it is our responsibility to make sure we advocate for them. We owe it to them as well as their families.

Thank you very much.

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