



An Introduction to the Role of Pharmacists in Substance Abuse

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Appropriate medication use is a primary goal for clinical pharmacy. However, appropriate medication use can easily cross the line to abuse of medications and illegal substances. To the general public the distinctions between appropriate drug use, potential toxicity from medications used appropriately, and the inappropriate use of medications can be confusing.

To professionals the inappropriate use of medications is a topic of concern and requires vigilance to root out offenders and create an environment where detoxification and behavior modification can change from inappropriate to appropriate use.

This issue of the journal focuses on substance abuse from several vantage points. Our vision is always to focus on the needs of pharmacy's various clients (i.e., patients, physicians, other health care professionals, purchasers, payers, etc.) and

to determine what information pharmacists need to satisfy those needs. In line with this vision, the overriding goal for this issue is to address substance abuse as a medical problem and identify the role that pharmacists play as caregivers and patient advocates. Our hope is that pharmacy's clients will see the intimate role that pharmacists play in addressing the problem of substance abuse, and that pharmacists will "step up to the plate" to assume and expand their role in the care team.

Patient-specific management is introduced by an article on the Implementation of Opioid Contracts and Management, and then expanded upon by a Clinical Practice Capsule on Substance Abuse Disorders, and a business model on the VA Methadone Clinic and the types of services that are provided to manage pain using opiates. We then focus on a particular patient type: namely, the pharmacist that abuses medications. The California State Board of Pharmacy staff details the Pharmacist Recovery Program.

To address the pharmacist's role in substance abuse, Bill Young, a pharmacist and attorney, provides a focus on the pharmacist's role specifically and the legal environment in which they operate (The Role of Pharmacists in Substance Abuse).

Substance abuse provides a particular problem on the general topic of risk management. This issue provides the context and the tools. We call on all pharmacists to publicize our role in the treatment and oversight of this medical problem. ☞