

PRESS CONTACT:

Joanna Clark, CXO Communication
joanna@cxocommunication.com
(207) 712-1404

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO TREATING ACUTE PAIN

New resource from IHI offers guidance on developing programs for safe and effective treatment

Boston, MA — March 4, 2019 — More than 63,000 people in the US died of drug overdoses in 2016, and two-thirds of those overdoses involved prescription or illicit opioids. Even as health care providers have in many instances reversed once liberal prescribing of opioids — a significant factor driving the spike in addiction and deaths — open questions remain about how to safely and effectively treat acute pain without over-reliance on these drugs.

Now, the [Institute for Healthcare Improvement](#) (IHI), a leader in health and health care worldwide, has developed a resource to help health professionals working on this issue. [Advancing the Safety of Acute Pain Management](#) calls for shifting the paradigm from an expectation that pain can be eliminated to one in which clinicians work with patients and families to manage pain in the context of functional and quality of life goals — and where opioids are only one option for pain control.

“Providing comprehensive, holistic, safe care for patients with acute pain while minimizing the use of opioids is a very challenging goal for health care organizations and clinicians,” said **Patricia McGaffigan, RN, MS, CPPS**, Vice President, Safety Programs, IHI. “Our aim with this new resource is to illuminate acute pain management as a patient safety priority and to assist the field in developing an effective pain management strategy.”

While there are existing clinical guidelines for treating pain, often organized by medical specialty such as cardiology or oncology, the new resource recommends that every health care organization develop an overarching strategy for treating acute pain. In practice, such a strategy requires assessing organizational strengths and weaknesses around opioid prescribing; determining what metrics to use to measure improvements; and developing and implementing plans that include comprehensive staff education and training and a patient-centered approach to pain assessment and treatment.

Advancing the Safety of Acute Pain Management was made possible by financial support from Pacira Pharmaceuticals to further the patient safety mission and the delivery of safe care. IHI exercised sole and independent control of all content and editorial decisions related to the project.

“We believe breaking down departmental silos will allow organizations to comprehensively tackle the complex issues associated with acute pain management through the development of centralized goals and plans,” said **Richard Scranton**, Chief Medical Officer at Pacira Pharmaceuticals. “Inadequate management of acute pain is a patient safety issue, and we hope the tools included in this resource will help organizations develop robust pain management strategies focused on improving the overall patient recovery process.”

Specifically aimed at hospitals, emergency departments, ambulatory surgical centers, and other settings where patients are most likely to be dealing with acute pain, the new resource includes templates for conducting organizational assessments and a case example of how to build an effective, safe, pain management strategy.

(continued)

IHI is offering health professionals a related virtual training session. [Pain Management: Moving Beyond Opioids](#) begins **March 6** and continues in weekly sessions over five weeks. This resource will also be featured at an all-day workshop at the [IHI Patient Safety Congress](#), **May 15–17**, in Houston.

About the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI)

The Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) is an independent not-for-profit organization based in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. For more than 25 years, IHI has used improvement science to advance and sustain better outcomes in health and health systems across the world. IHI brings awareness of safety and quality to millions, catalyzes learning and the systematic improvement of care, develops solutions to previously intractable challenges, and mobilizes health systems, communities, regions, and nations to reduce harm and deaths. IHI collaborates with a growing community to spark bold, inventive ways to improve the health of individuals and populations. IHI generates optimism, harvests fresh ideas, and supports anyone, anywhere who wants to profoundly change health and health care for the better. Learn more at ihi.org.

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