Start the Conversation about Improving Pain Management

The IHI Open School Recover Hope Campaign aims to improve awareness, prevention, and treatment of substance use disorders. This conversation guide aims to help people talk about their pain management priorities, create a shared understanding of what matters most to them, and identify actions they can take to achieve their goals.

Steps to get started:

1. Identify someone – a friend, family member, classmate, colleague, patient, community member – who may benefit from a meaningful, action-oriented conversation about pain management. Reach out to schedule a dedicated time and place to meet.

2. Introduce yourself and the IHI Open School Recover Hope Campaign. Share your hopes for the meeting. Ask the other person about what they hope to gain from this conversation.

3. Use motivational interviewing to ask open-ended questions about the person’s experience of pain.

4. End the conversation with a commitment to next steps – whether it’s meeting again, sharing resources and learning more about pain management alternatives to opioids, or a conversation between the individual and their care team.

Tips for a productive conversation:

Take a Motivational Interviewing Approach:
Motivational interviewing is a collaborative, goal-oriented conversation style that facilitates non-judgmental discussion. The purpose of motivational interviewing is to address ambivalence about change and strengthen a person’s own motivation and commitment to alert their behavior. This approach is about creating a partnership with another individual; it is performed in collaboration with a person, not done to a person. The goal of this conversation is to activate agency in patients to take action.

Core Skills of Motivational Interviewing:
- Use open-ended questions to encourage self-exploration
- Affirm the individual’s strengths, efforts, character and worth
- Reflectively listen to focus on the individual and convey understanding and empathy
- Summarize to provide the big picture

Sample Questions:
1. What is important to you as you think about how you want to live your life?
2. What is your experience of pain?
3. What are your pain management goals?
4. Tell me about how your treatment plan was established.
5. What would you like to know about your treatment plan?