



# Gifford Medical Center

## **Patient Safety Project**

### Narcotic Therapy Agreements and Continuity of Care

#### **Project aim**

The aim of this patient safety project is to improve communication and the consistency of treatment in alignment with a patient's chronic pain management plan and goals, and to, whenever possible, decrease a patient's dependence on narcotic therapy and improve his or her quality of life.

#### **Time frame**

March 2008 to March 2009

#### **Description**

This safety initiative creates a system that identifies patients with Narcotic Therapy Agreements to ensure their continuity of care across the continuum – whether in the Emergency Department, primary care provider's office or as an inpatient – regarding chronic narcotic therapy and pain management.

#### **Description of the problem**

Substance abuse is a significant problem that strains the health care system. Because opioid medications have the potential for the development of addictive disorders, abuse and/or diversion, strict accountability is necessary when use is prolonged. The patient must understand the importance of compliance to his or her treatment plan and contract to protect his or her continued access to controlled substances. The agreement also helps Gifford providers meet the strict federal and state regulations regarding prescribing narcotics. One provider should carefully manage a patient's chronic opioid use.

#### **Project goals with appropriate measures**

The goals of this project are to:

1. Ensure a consistent medical assessment and treatment plan prior to initiating chronic narcotic therapy;
2. Develop a system to identify patient care needs for chronic pain management across the continuum of care at Gifford Medical Center;
3. Decrease the role of the Emergency Department in dispensing of narcotics for chronic pain; and
4. Develop Emergency Department guidelines for the dispensing of chronic narcotic pain medication and communicate these guidelines to patients.

### **Description of the intervention(s)**

1. The Narcotic Therapy Agreement was revised and the supporting policy put into place June 2008.
2. Presence of Narcotic Therapy Agreement and plan is identified in a patient's electronic record.
3. Every two years a treatment plan review is built into ongoing therapy process.
4. The Pain Management Specialist is available for consultations and these consultations are encouraged.
5. Emergency Department narcotic dispensing guidelines are posted in each Emergency Department exam room.

### **Evaluation process and results**

1. The Narcotic Therapy Agreement and supporting policy is in use. Providers are systematically reviewing the agreements and treatment plans with patients.
2. Having a note in a patient's electronic medical record regarding an agreement makes this information available to subsequent providers and supports the patient's continuity of care.
3. Emergency Department narcotic dispensing guidelines are being acknowledged by patients in the Emergency Department.
4. The Pain Management Specialist is consulting on difficult pain management issues and providing continuing medical education to peers regarding pain management.

### **Contact**

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