

# The Opioid Epidemic: Implications for the Workplace

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## Overview

- ▶ What is the Epidemic
- ▶ Understanding the epidemic and understanding this disease
- ▶ Implications for the workplace in managing education and information for their supervisors and employees

## Headlines 2018

Baltimore to rate  
Hospitals on Opioid  
Response (3.30.18)

PA: The rate has  
not peaked  
projection of 2024  
(9.15.17)

144 Americans die  
every day  
(CDC 4.18)

Pot deaths linked  
to Fentanyl increase  
(4.2.18)

Mental Illness  
Untreated: Facing  
policy makers to  
address the issues  
(5.4.18)

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## Trend of Daily Prescription Drug Overdoses

- ▶ 2012: 50 Americans (CDC)
- ▶ 2017: 144 Americans (CDC)
- ▶ Each 2.5 weeks, the same number of Americans die as all who died on 9/11
- ▶ (Governor Christie: 10/30/2017 IN Atty General Conference))

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## The Treatment of Pain: How we created this

- ▶ Hospice 1980's recognizing patients need pain meds
- ▶ Pain experts state only 1% will become addicted to narcotics, in the hospital. (Hershel Jick, MD 1980)
- ▶ Mexican Black Tar Heroin developed and implemented to sell in the United States as a business (1980's)
- ▶ 1990's Introduction of Oxycontin, Purdue Pharma marketing plan with long lasting time release meds
- ▶ Millions receiving 60-90 scripts for narcotics for all types of procedures when other meds/recommendations would suffice past the initial event of surgery or injury
- ▶ Problem identified and prescribers identified and shut down (2013 in Indiana)
- ▶ Once Oxycontin and other pain meds limited, Black Tar Heroin became the inexpensive substitute, now other street drugs including Fentanyl and Carfentanyl

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## INDIANAPOLIS (WTHR) - Indiana is ranked 15th in the nation when it comes to deaths from overdoses.

- ▶ Published: Jul 5th, 2017 - 2:37pm (EDT)
- ▶ Updated: Jul 8th, 2017 - 2:49am (EDT)
- ▶ On Wednesday, Governor Eric Holcomb and State leaders announced five new opioid treatment centers to help combat the epidemic. For the first time, Indiana Medicaid will pay for methadone treatment.
- ▶ New updates: 9 new treatment centers to be developed. Current centers to be added by June 30<sup>th</sup>.

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## Recent Practices Demonstrate

- ▶ Upon admission to treatment in Indiana, top drugs of choice reported are:
  - Alcohol
  - Opioids
  - Polysubstance abuse
    - Opioids
    - Cannabis
    - Benzodiazepines
    - Alcohol

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## Is this close to home?

- ▶ Know someone who has died from prescriptions they took as prescribed?
- ▶ Know someone who died as a result of prescriptions that got out of control?
- ▶ Know someone who used others prescriptions?
- ▶ Know someone who gave unused prescriptions away without realizing what they were doing?

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## Potency of Synthetics

- ▶ Fentanyl can be from 50 - 100 times stronger than morphine
- ▶ Fentanyl is 50 times stronger than heroin
- ▶ Carfentanyl is 100 times more potent than fentanyl.
- ▶ Carfentanyl is 10,000 times more potent than morphine.

## Clarification

If employees are currently taking prescription medications:

- ▶ This training supports continued use as prescribed
- ▶ And encourages review of how they are used in ways that support health and well-being
- ▶ This training also will review processes and healthy life-styles/alternatives that individuals are invited to consider

## Stats of use patterns

- ▶ **AVAILABILITY:** More than 50% of people who misuse opioids pain relievers obtained them from family or friends without permission.
- ▶ **SUICIDE ATTEMPTS:** Prescription drugs and over the counter medications account for Emergency Room visits related to suicide attempts



## Prescription Drugs

- ▶ Prescribed and useful
- ▶ Shared
- ▶ Used when not intended
- ▶ Over prescribed
- ▶ Not understood
- ▶ Power of drug not appreciated

## Why is Prescription Misuse Increasing?

- ▶ Direct consumer advertising lack of professional education
- ▶ Overprescribing Doctor shopping
- ▶ Ineffective prescription monitoring
- ▶ Reactive policies, rather than preventative
- ▶ General societal acceptance: Social learning
- ▶ Sharing prescriptions with others, and taking prescriptions from others

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## Use - Misuse - Disorder

- ▶ **Use:** only as prescribed and then dispensing in safe manner
- ▶ **Misuse:** without a prescription or in ways not prescribed; and/or sharing with others
- ▶ **SUD:**
  - ▶ tolerance for or dependency on substances
  - ▶ avoidance of "sick"
  - ▶ using excessively
  - ▶ taking/stealing
  - ▶ life/work function is disrupted

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## Impact on workplaces

March 2017 Survey by the National Safety Council

- ▶ 70% of business owners say narcotic painkillers have affected their business
- ▶ They recommend certain steps to take
  - ▶ Educate employees
  - ▶ Educate and train supervisors to recognize drug use
  - ▶ Clear written policy, including the restrictions based on testing and observation to keep your workplace drug free
  - ▶ Drug Testing
  - ▶ Utilize your EAP

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## Workplace: No industry is immune

- ▶ "In 2010, 23% of the U.S. workforce had used prescription drugs to get high or to self-treat a medication condition without guidance from a physician or medical professional." -National Safety Council (2014)
- ▶ "Work-related issues associated with increased opioid use include the potential for work-related injuries to initiate prescription drug use and possibly subsequent misuse" -Centers for Disease Control (2016)
- ▶ "More than 82 percent of voters think prescription drug abuse is a problem in our country... Nearly half report they know someone who has abused or is abusing prescription drugs." -2016 Poll; CVS Health (2016)

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## 5 REASONS NOT TO SHARE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS AT WORK

1. Federal law prohibits the possession or use of someone else's prescription drugs.
2. You could get fired from your job for distributing prescription drugs without a medical license.
3. Someone else's prescription drugs may cause problems with your current medicines or medical conditions. They also may cause you to have a serious side effect or allergic reaction.
4. Using leftover prescription drugs—yours or someone else's—may mean you do not get the correct amount, and your infection or illness may become harder to treat.
5. You could be responsible for coworkers' injuries if they take your prescription drugs. And, depending on where you live, if the person you gave the drugs to give them to someone else, you also may be legally responsible for the other person's injuries.

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## Rx Spending Rising for Employers

- ▶ According to the CDC, people who are dependent on prescription opioids are **40 times** more likely to abuse or be dependent on heroin.
- ▶ The best way to prevent abuse is by addressing these risks to employees and their families *before* someone gets addicted.

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## Rx Spending Rising for Employers

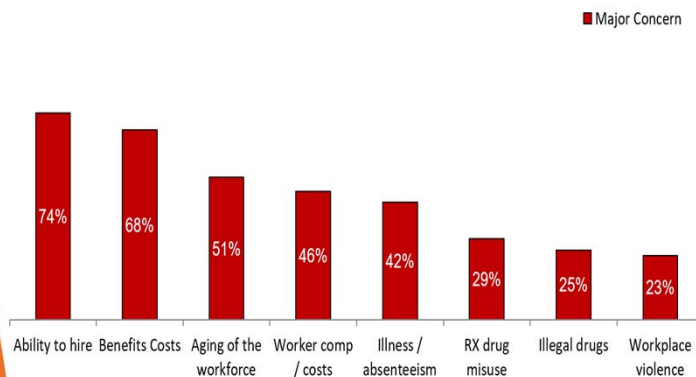
- ▶ Adult misuse of prescription drugs is an expensive growing problem.
- ▶ Employees use due to the need to manage pain, pressure to increase productivity and attentiveness, and enhance or manage energy, restlessness, or being overtired.
- ▶ When people at risk can no longer get access to prescription medication they are increasingly turning to illegal drugs, including heroin.
- ▶ [www.organizationalwellness.com](http://www.organizationalwellness.com)

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## NSC Indiana Workplace Survey 2015



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## Impact on the Workplace

- ▶ Reduced productivity or work quality
- ▶ Absenteeism and tardiness
- ▶ Bizarre and/or disruptive behavior
- ▶ Concentration problems
- ▶ Erratic work habits
- ▶ Concerns about possible substance use
- ▶ Interpersonal conflicts; confrontations with coworkers and/or customers
- ▶ Violence at home or at work, including threats of suicide or workplace violence

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## Management Focus

- ▶ Know your employer policies and procedures
- ▶ Be aware of legally sensitive areas
- ▶ Recognize potential problems
- ▶ Document in a systematic and fair manner
- ▶ Act in a confidential manner
- ▶ Refer to appropriate resources
- ▶ Reintegration into the workplace

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## Review Policies

- Address non-medical use of prescription and over-the-counter medications in the policy
- Include prescription medications in drug testing panel and policy
- Provide guidance to employees on when it is okay to use medication at work and if they should report this use
- Be able to assign employees to alternate work tasks while on medication
- Provide information about how to access employee benefit and employee assistance programs

## Necessary to Understand

- ▶ Company policy and procedures
  - ▶ Drug testing
  - ▶ Disciplinary action
- ▶ Dangers in the workplace
  - ▶ Safety risks
  - ▶ Financial risks
  - ▶ Corporate brand/image risks
- ▶ Security of medications at work

## Training Content

- ▶ Describe the physical and emotional signs/symptoms employees could exhibit
- ▶ Explain the focus for disciplinary action(s) should be on job performance
  - ▶ Reinforce that supervisors, managers and co-workers should not attempt to diagnose
- ▶ Give examples of physical evidence left behind
- ▶ Review slang words or terms related to Rx drug abuse
- ▶ Educate supervisors/managers regarding drug testing

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## Rx Spending Rising for Employers

- ▶ An effective solution is using evidence-based education and training in health consciousness.
- ▶ Health consciousness means the ongoing ability to pay attention to what we ingest; getting exercise, rest; and using our body and mind together.
- ▶ More preventive measures and training are needed before people develop a substance use disorder.

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## Alternative Approaches to Pain

- ▶ There are many different ways to manage and reduce chronic pain, be aware of employees off for injuries
  - ▶ Physical Therapy
  - ▶ Over the counter pain medication
  - ▶ Diet or lifestyle change
  - ▶ Chiropractor
  - ▶ Herbal remedies
  - ▶ Acupuncture

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## Health Consciousness

Negative behaviors and lifestyles can protect from change in addictive behaviors. Instead:

- ▶ **Use healthy alternatives:**
  - ▶ habits, tactics, acts, self-reminders to keep us in a state of **Health Consciousness**
- ▶ **Put ourselves in healthy situations:**
  - ▶ (social, work, play, healthy environments) that “pull” us to choose **Health Consciousness**
- ▶ **Reach out and be with others:**
  - ▶ who “push” or “Nudge” us to choose **Health Consciousness**

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## Things Parents Can Do to Help Teens Avoid Risks

- ▶ Take inventory of the prescription and OTC drugs you have at home. Do any of them have the potential for abuse? Properly destroy unused or outdated medicine.
- ▶ Monitor and safeguard any and all prescription drugs that a child is currently taking.
- ▶ Role model care and careful use (not misuse) of any and all prescription drugs you use. Use opportunity to educate. Openly discuss the risks of use and the importance of medical supervision and proper disposal.
- ▶ Understand motives behind signs of use or misuse (eg. weight loss, pain, better grades) and speak compassionately first.
- ▶ Personally avoid websites that sell prescription drugs.
- ▶ Be honest (come clean) if your child challenges your own use.
- ▶ Discuss how avoidance is part of **HEALTH CONSCIOUSNESS**.

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[http://medicineabuseproject.org/assets/documents/parent\\_talk\\_kit.pdf](http://medicineabuseproject.org/assets/documents/parent_talk_kit.pdf)

## Safe Disposal of Opioids

- ▶ DO NOT FLUSH THEM. They end up in our water supply in streams and rivers.
- ▶ Take to a drug store or police station. Watch for narcotic and other drug collection sites in your area.
- ▶ Ask the Pharmacist to only fill what you think you will use. They can add to it if your need changes.
- ▶ See NSC posters for display at work

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## Resources

- ▶ National Safety Council
  - ▶ [www.nsc.org/rxpainkillers](http://www.nsc.org/rxpainkillers)
- ▶ NSC Prescription Drug Employer Kit
  - ▶ [www.nsc.org/rxemployerpolicy](http://www.nsc.org/rxemployerpolicy)
- ▶ Bitter Pill: Indiana
  - ▶ [www.in.gov/bitterpill/workplace-risks.html](http://www.in.gov/bitterpill/workplace-risks.html)
- ▶ Department of Labor E-Laws Drug Free Workplace Advisor
  - ▶ <http://www.dol.gov/elaws/drugfree.htm>

## Thank you for attending!

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