

Texas Hospital Association Voluntary Guidelines for Hospital Emergency Department Prescribers of Opioids

Background:

The Texas Hospital Association has developed recommended, voluntary guidelines for use by Texas hospitals in their emergency departments to curb misuse and abuse of opioid painkillers. The guidelines, developed with input from THA's Behavioral Health Council, Hospital Physician Executive Committee and Quality and Patient Safety Council, are designed to be one piece in helping to reduce the number of opioid-related deaths in Texas. The guidelines were endorsed by THA's Board of Trustees in February 2018.

Recommendations:

1. Consider developing a process for identifying patients both at risk for developing a substance use disorder and for those with a substance use disorder.
 - Emergency Departments are encouraged to develop a protocol for treating pregnant and post-partum women at risk for developing a substance use disorder or who have an active substance use disorder.
2. Prescriptions for controlled substances that are lost, destroyed or stolen, or doses of methadone for patients in methadone treatment programs should be prescribed only by the initial prescriber, primary care provider or pain specialist.
3. Consider adopting a multi-modal non-opioid medication model for acute pain management treatment.
4. If opioids are used in the Emergency Department, use of short-acting opioids only is advised.
5. When opioid medications are prescribed:
 - Any prescriptions for opioids should be written for the shortest duration possible, usually no more than three to five days, unless the diagnosing physician feels more are needed based on the patient's diagnosis.
 - A system should be in place to contact the patient's primary opioid prescriber or primary care provider, to notify them of the visit and the medication prescribed.
6. Emergency department providers, or their designees, are strongly encouraged to consult the state's Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP AWA RxE) before writing opioid prescriptions.

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