

Falling Down the Rabbit Hole: Prescription Drug Addiction, Part 2

Our last issue of this newsletter focused on ways to safeguard ourselves from sliding down the slippery slope of prescription pain medication abuse – slipping from pain management into an addictive relationship with opioids. One of the best ways to protect yourself from that slippery slope is to be prepared to communicate with your physician about your pain level and other approaches that may be available to alleviate and treat chronic pain.

Alternatives to opioid use

According to *Business Insider* (Aug 10, 2016), insurance companies have resisted covering alternative therapies to opioid use for pain management. While there are some benefits to prescription drugs for short-term pain management, alternative therapies can supplement opioid medication in the treatment of chronic pain, or better yet, eliminate the need for opioid pain medication altogether.

It's important to advocate for your health and wellness. Take time to learn about alternative treatments. Besides the obvious concern of becoming addicted to prescription medication and developing a tolerance, prescription drugs are not cost effective. Prescription drugs mask or block the pain instead of "mending" the problem.



Natural alternatives are considered safer and typically do not have the same significant side effects. Prescription medications – including analgesics like acetaminophen and NSAIDs (e.g. naproxen, ibuprofen) – are linked to many side effects such as high blood pressure, yellowing of the skin, trouble urinating, stomach ulcers and pain, and liver or kidney damage.

One alternative to prescription drug use is chiropractic or osteopathic medicine. Many patients experience significant improvement in lower back pain in as little as four treatments. Doctors of Chiropractic and Doctors of Osteopathy are both licensed to practice chiropractic to relieve pain. One difference between osteopathic and chiropractic doctors is their level of education. An osteopathic doctor is a physician, whereas a chiropractor is not fully licensed to practice medicine. Nevertheless, both types of providers are well qualified to practice

pain management, and osteopathic or chiropractic care is a good alternative.

A second option for pain management is to take a holistic approach that strengthens mind, body, and soul. Counselors and life coaches can work with you to identify ways to improve your emotional health, relationships, resilience and lifestyle choices. They can also help you identify and take steps towards goals that reduce stress, increase activity level and fitness, and reduce self-defeating thoughts.

Third, check your diet. Pain can affect appetite, good nutrition suffers and poor nutrition impacts your ability to heal. Consult with a nutritionist or dietitian to work on weight management, nutrition, meal planning, and learn about nutritional supplements that support overall good health.

If you are dealing with acute or chronic pain, talk with your doctor about alternatives to opioid pain medication. Ask about the risks of taking opioid pain medication, your doctor's recommendations for pain management beyond opioid pain medications, and whether alternative treatments might be covered by your insurance.

Contact Personal Assistance Services (PAS), your EAP, to access a wide variety of services that can also support



www.paseap.com

About Your EAP

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a benefit set up by your employer to assist you in dealing with personal concerns that may affect your work or home life. Use of the EAP is confidential and free to you and your immediate family members.

Visit our website for more information:

<https://www.paseap.com>

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear."

~Nelson Mandela





Exercise Your Resilience

Do you want to effectively respond to stress and life's challenges? Here are some ideas to help you increase your resilience. You'll bounce back more easily next time adversity comes your way!

1. Nurture your connections with family and friends.
2. Review what you can change in your life; let go of everything else.
3. Don't ignore a problem - take action.
4. Trust your instincts.
5. Keep things in perspective; avoid "awfulizing" events.
6. Develop an optimistic view of life.
7. Practice good self-care.
8. Journal.
9. Develop mindfulness.
10. Maintain helpful spiritual practices that restore hope.

Falling Down the Rabbit Hole, part 2 (continued from page 1)

recovery from pain and management of chronic pain:

Health coaching –Whole health educators guide you through questions to ask your doctor and how to discuss your concerns, and help you work toward goals for improving your overall wellbeing.

Nutrition coaching – nutritionists and dietitians work with you to improve your nutrition, learn about nutritional supplements that support good health, and plan healthy, satisfying meals that benefit your entire family.

Solution-focused counseling – licensed counselors provide guidance and support in achieving increased resilience, coping strategies for stress and pain, improving relationships, assessing for substance use, and regaining hope.

Life coaching – trained coaches work with you to set goals, focus on the future, achieve life balance, and strengthen your resilience.

How do I know if I am experiencing prescription drug abuse?

Knowing what questions to ask helps to safeguard your physical and mental health; yet, sometimes knowing isn't enough. You must also act on what you know. *Avoidance and denial can kill.*

Signs of prescription drug abuse

include:

- Building a tolerance to the drug/medication; needing more to obtain the same effect
- Cravings for more medication
- Change in appetite or sleep patterns
- Irritability, poor concentration
- Sweating and/or shakes when the medication wears off
- Diarrhea, stomach aches, and/or vomiting
- Racing heartbeat
- Headaches
- Counting down the minutes until the next dosage

If you are concerned about how much pain medication you are using, have questions about opioid pain medications, or think you may be addicted, act now. Call PAS at (800) 356-0845 for immediate guidance and help. Masters' level counselors are available 24/7/365 for immediate support.



If you are in crisis or having a medical emergency, call 911 immediately. Your life just may depend on it.

Featured Service: Health Coaching



If you or a loved one has a health concern and wants to improve the quality of life, caring PAS health coaches offer education and support to help:

- Make lifestyle changes to adapt to health concerns or improve your health
- Use nutrition and exercise to improve your overall wellness
- Learn ways to effectively communicate with health care providers
- Know what questions to ask when going to the doctor
- Find answers to questions regarding diagnoses, testing, medications, and procedures
- Learn ways to live well with an illness and slow its progression
- Support a loved one dealing with their health concern

A Service of Your EAP (800) 356-0845