

Provider Newsletter



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Extra help for better health

Unintentional Drug Poisoning in the United States

A recent publication from the CDC (available at www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Poisoning/brief.htm) contains some alarming statistics about unintentional drug poisoning in the United States:

- Drug overdose death rates have risen steadily since 1970, and rates have increased *fivefold* since 1990.
- In 2006 there were 26,400 deaths from unintentional drug overdose, and opioids were involved in more overdose deaths than heroin and cocaine combined.
- There has been a tenfold increase in the medical use of opioid painkillers during the last 15 years because of the movement toward more aggressive management of pain.
- Opioids are now widely available on the illicit drug market in the United States.
- The highest mortality rates are among people age 45 to 54; however, rates have increased *dramatically* for people between 15 and 24 years of age.
- Mortality rates have doubled for males and tripled for females since 1999.
- Prescription or over-the-counter drugs used nonmedically were involved in an estimated *one million* ER visits in 2008. Opioid painkillers were associated with approximately 306,000 visits, and benzodiazepines with 272,000 visits.
- In 2006 the drug overdose death rate in Illinois was 9.6/100,000.

Did You Know?

The direct healthcare costs of people who abuse opioids are more than eight times those of nonabusers. The costs to society of *prescription opioid* abuse were estimated at \$8.6 billion in 2001.

What Can You as a Healthcare Provider Do?

The CDC has the following recommendations, which are based on promising interventions and expert opinion:

- Use opioid medications for acute or chronic pain only after determining that alternative therapies do not deliver adequate pain relief. The lowest effective dose of opioids should be used.

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After-Hours Coverage and the Illinois Health Connect Medical Home

The goal of Illinois Health Connect (IHC) is to provide every HFS client with a high-quality medical home.

Essential features of the medical home are accessibility to care and patient education about appropriate care. As outlined in the IHC Provider Application and Agreement, all IHC-enrolled PCP sites agree to provide enrollees with direct access through an answering service/paging mechanism or other approved arrangement, for coverage 24 hours a day, seven days a week. This means that IHC patients must be able to contact a clinical decision-maker (LPN, RN, APN, PA, or physician) in order to get medical advice when the office is not open. Automatic referral to a hospital ER through a recorded message or answering service does not qualify.

Providers can meet this requirement by allowing enrollees to call an answering service, a physician pager, a physician home or cell phone, or a nurse or other designated medical provider. The PCP or its after-hours coverage provider will assess the enrollee's nonemergent symptoms, advise the enrollee, and make arrangements to examine or treat the enrollee as necessary.

Enrolled PCP sites sometimes ask about the use of the Illinois Nurse Helpline. The purpose of the Nurse Helpline is to provide backup support to enrollees who cannot reach their PCPs after hours or on weekends, as a means of minimizing unnecessary ER use. The Nurse Helpline is not intended as an option for meeting the after-hours access and availability requirement.

IHC recognizes the challenges of maintaining a personal and patient-centered medical home while eliminating barriers to care for your patients. Please contact IHC if you have any questions or would like assistance regarding this important aspect of your practice. Our Provider Services Helpdesk can be reached at **1-877-912-1999**. ■

Supporting Your Practice



Success Story: Heartland International Health Center

Heartland International Health Center has found success using the quality tools available for medical homes in Illinois Health Connect. With these tools Heartland has both incorporated IHC reports into their patient outreach protocol and complemented their existing electronic medical records system.

Heartland chief operating officer Tony Beltran credits an improvement in their Vaccines for Children (VFC) compliance rates to the use of the spreadsheet (CSV) version of the IHC panel roster, which can be accessed using the MEDI Provider Portal. Heartland used the panel roster to reach out to patients who were due for well-child visits, which enabled them to get those pediatric patients immunized on schedule.

“We noticed that our compliance on our VFC vaccines actually went up,” Beltran says. “We could see the numbers from previous audits to this audit, and they actually got better and were completed in a more timely fashion. The VFC audits are very dependent on dates, so even if a child is fully immunized, if it wasn’t in the specified time frame, then that’s a challenge. The panel roster allowed us to be a bit more proactive.”

The CSV version of the panel roster allows a medical home to filter the information according to which services the patients are due, based on HFS claims data. This allows the medical home to seek out patients who have not already scheduled an appointment.

“We were missing a piece that this provided to us,” Beltran says. “We had been getting these reports in the past. But once it became electronic and we could view it through Excel and check, it actually became an easier system. We didn’t have to go through paper to look at this report. We had all the data at our fingertips.”

In addition to their success using the panel roster, Heartland benefited from the information provided in the IHC Bonus Program, specifically the objective developmental screenings for ages 12, 24, and 36 months.

“That information actually triggered us to establish a process for those screenings,” Beltran says. “We created a protocol and trained all the providers to schedule follow-ups with the patients. If they are up-to-date with everything else except that pediatric developmental screening, then we call them in for separate appointments to complete that, which is probably something we wouldn’t have done otherwise.”

Although Heartland already used an electronic medical record system to track mammograms, colon/rectal cancer screenings, dental treatment, and other services, the IHC Bonus Program sparked an initiative to track developmental screenings, Beltran says.

“The Bonus Program communication helped us put the issue on our radar,” Beltran said. “It changed the way we thought about the process for developmental screenings. It made us realize, Yes, we really do need to focus on this, and here’s how we do it. It started the conversation, and once we had established a better system, we put it in place.”

If your practice would like additional information about using the IHC Panel Rosters or Bonus Payment program to improve clinical care, please contact the IHC Provider Service Helpdesk at **1-877-912-1999** and arrange for a IHC Quality Assurance Nurse to visit your practice. ■

CME Modules Now Updated

The YHP free Continuing Medical Education (CME) modules have recently been updated with both new clinical information and an enhanced technology platform. These modules can be accessed at www.YHPlus.com and include the following programs:

- How to Conduct a Quality Improvement Program in Primary Care Practice
- Quality Improvement Programs for managing the following in Primary Care:
 - Childhood Asthma
 - Adult Depression
 - COPD
 - Heart Failure
 - Diabetes
 - Substance-Use Disorders ■

Supporting Your Patients



HFS Dental Program

Oral health is a very important part of overall health and well-being. Children should receive regular dental care starting at age two, or sooner if needed, and should visit the dentist at least every six months. DentaQuest, the HFS dental program administrator, covers all medically necessary dental services for children from birth through age twenty. Dental services for adults are limited to dental emergency and treatment services. To find out what services are covered or to find a dentist to refer a patient to, call DentaQuest at **1-888-286-2447** (TTY: call **1-800-466-7566**). There are limitations on frequency of services, and the dentist must be enrolled with DentaQuest and HFS in order to be paid for covered dental services.

Although providers understand the importance of prevention and early treatment of disease, many patients seek dental care only when they are in pain, using hospital emergency rooms (ERs) for treatment of dental problems. Managing dental emergencies in hospital ERs is not cost effective, yet many people continue to use ERs for dental services. Often these individuals do not receive proper follow-up care, resulting in even greater complications and expenses.

You can assist the HFS dental program and reduce the overuse of ERs for dental services by referring your patients to a dentist for needed dental care. To find a dentist, contact DentaQuest Customer Service at **1-888-286-2447**.

If you know of dentists in your community interested in enrolling with Medicaid, please have them call DentaQuest Provider Services at **1-888-281-2076**. For more information, visit http://www.hfs.illinois.gov/mch/dental_prov.html or <http://www.dentaquestgov.com/> (select Illinois). ■

Member ID Cards

The Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) is moving to the standard practice of issuing permanent or semipermanent cards for Medicaid clients. HFS will replace the existing paper cards with more durable cards for all currently eligible Medicaid recipients. Recipients will no longer receive a new card every month. Providers will need to confirm current eligibility using the HFS' MEDI system. For assistance in registering for the MEDI system, contact the Illinois Health Connect Provider Services Helpdesk at **1-877-912-1999**. HFS plans to implement this new policy

within a year. HB5054, which passed in both the Illinois House of Representatives and the Illinois Senate, requires that on or before July 1, 2011, the department cease issuing monthly cards and instead issue permanent or semipermanent member cards to individuals enrolled for medical assistance.

Look for more details and updates regarding this change in the next edition of the provider newsletter! ■

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- In addition to behavioral screening and use of patient contracts, consider random periodic, targeted urine testing for opioids and other drugs for any patient less than 65 years old with noncancer pain who is being treated with opioids for more than six weeks.
- If a patient's dosage has increased to at least 120 morphine milligram equivalents per day without substantial improvement in pain and function, seek a consult from a pain specialist.
- Do *not* prescribe long-acting or controlled-release opioids for acute pain.
- Periodically check the Prescription Information Library (PIL) secure Web site at <https://www.ilpmp.org>. Prescribers and

dispensers who have registered and been assigned a user name may access and look up their patient to see a current six-month controlled-substance history (includes *all* prescribers and dispensers who have provided controlled substances to the individual).

- Current guidelines for pain management are posted on the IHC website at www.illinoishealthconnect.com under the Clinical Resources section.

And importantly, since children are also at risk, remember to teach your patients about how to safeguard their children from accidental poisoning from the medications you prescribe.

Other helpful information can be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/Features/PoisonPrevention>. ■



Did you know?

The “Text 4 Baby” Initiative

Text4baby—www.text4baby.org—is a free mobile health service that provides health information through SMS text messages to pregnant women and new mothers during their babies’ first year.

By texting BABY to 511411 (or BEBE for Spanish), or registering through www.text4baby.org, women receive three free SMS text messages each week timed to their due date or based on baby’s date of birth. These messages focus on a variety of topics critical to maternal and child health, including preventive care, immunizations, oral health, birth

defects prevention, nutrition, seasonal flu, mental health, and safe sleep. Text4baby messages also connect women to prenatal and infant care services and other resources.

Text4baby is a service of the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalition (HMHB), but the Department of Health and Human Services and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy are partners in the initiative. Thanks to the support of all major US mobile operators, the service is free to women who subscribe. ■

Visit the [Your Healthcare Plus](http://www.yourhealthcareplus.com) and the [Illinois Health Connect](http://www.illinoishealthconnect.com) web sites for information on upcoming events.

This newsletter is available on the [Your Healthcare Plus](http://www.yourhealthcareplusdr.com) and [Illinois Health Connect](http://www.illinoishealthconnect.com) websites:

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