CDC Releases New Guidelines for Prescribing Opioid Medications

Earlier this week, the CDC released a statement announcing the availability of their new guidelines regarding opioid medication use for chronic pain. The CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain, United States, 2016 has been posted on their website and will assist primary care providers in choosing and prescribing the safest and most effective treatment for their patients.

According to the CDC, the prescribing and selling of opioids has quadrupled since 1999 here in the U.S. These guidelines were created in an effort to control the epidemic of prescription opioid overdoses currently being experienced in our country. They focus on the use of opioids use in the treatment of chronic pain, and come after months of pushback from doctors and drug industry groups who are adamantly opposed to the recommendations.

The CDC, however, believes that these recommendations are important for public safety. “More than 40 Americans die each day from prescription opioid overdoses,” said CDC Director Tom Frieden, M.D., M.P.H., “we must act now. Overprescribing opioids—largely for chronic pain—is a key driver of America’s drug-overdose epidemic. The guideline will give physicians and patients the information they need to make more informed decisions about treatment.”

Among the 12 recommendations in the guideline, three principles are key to improving patient care:

- Nonopioid therapy is preferred for chronic pain outside of active cancer, palliative, and end-of-life care.
- When opioids are used, the lowest possible effective dosage should be prescribed to reduce risks of opioid use disorder and overdose.
- Providers should always exercise caution when prescribing opioids and monitor all patients closely.

CDC developed user-friendly materials to assist providers with implementing the recommendations, including a decision checklist. These materials, as well as information for patients, are available by clicking here. To read more about this issue, click here to read a recent piece from the New York Times.

Pressure Ulcer Risk Higher for Residents Transferred from Hospitals

A recent study confirms that nursing home residents who have been transferred from hospitals are at a greater risk for developing pressure ulcers than those who were admitted from the community. Data for the study was collected from Canadian nursing homes and included information from more than 5,000 residents. Results backed up the researchers belief that those admitted to a nursing home directly from a hospital, regardless of their susceptibility to ulcers, had a higher chance of developing pressure ulcers or of already having one.
The study showed that of the 68 percent of residents who were transferred from a hospital, 9.2 percent were found to have a pressure ulcer upon admission, while only 2.6 percent of individuals who were admitted from the community had pressure ulcers when admitted. These results led the study's authors to call for preventative care practices among care providers to alleviate the risk of ulcers for individuals being transferred from a hospital.

To read the full article from McKnight's, click here.

**Health Care Related Infections Decreasing**

The rates of several health care associated infections (HAIs) are going down, according to a recent report from the CDC. According to the report, which analyzed data from more than 17,000 hospitals from long term care hospitals and inpatient rehabilitation centers across the country, HAIs like C. diff and MRSA affect one in 25 patients in the U.S.

Compared to a national baseline, almost all HAIs have decreased in recent years. Central-line associated bloodstream infections have seen a 50 percent drop in hospitals between 2008 and 2014, C. diff infections have gone down 8 percent between 2011 and 2014 and MRSA-related infections have dropped 13 percent. These promising results are not, however, a reason for health care providers to rest on their laurels.

CDC Director Tom Frieden stated that providers need to now turn their infection control efforts to antibiotic resistant "superbugs." “New data show that far too many patients are getting infected with dangerous, drug-resistant bacteria in healthcare settings,” he said. “Doctors and healthcare facilities have the power to protect patients – no one should get sick while trying to get well.”

Frieden recommends that providers be aware of antibiotic resistance patterns in their facilities, follow infection prevention guidelines and pay close attention to their antibiotic prescription practices in order to help curb antibiotic resistance.

For more information, click here.

**Omega-3s May Clear Up Lung Infections**

A study recently published in the *Journal of Immunology* discusses how compounds derived from omega-3 fatty acids might be the key to helping the body fight lung infections. Researchers at the University of Rochester tested the effectiveness of an inhalable omega-3 derivative to prevent a type of bacteria called Nontypeable Haemophilus influenza (NTHi). NTHi is often the source of trouble for individuals with inflammatory diseasess like chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

COPD is characterized by inflammation and excessive mucus in the lungs, which blocks airflow. It is most often caused by smoking. COPD is generally treated with anti-inflammatory medications. However, anti-inflammatory drugs suppress the immune system, which can then lead to secondary infections—most commonly NTHi bacterial infections.

“Our biggest concern with patients who have COPD is bacterial infections, which often put their lives at risk,” says Richard Phipps, professor of environmental medicine and director of the lung biology and disease program at the University of Rochester Medical Center. “If we can figure out how to predict who is likely to get an infection, physicians could put them on a preventative medication.”

Omega-3 fatty acids are found in fish like sardines and salmon and are widely known for their health benefits. They are normally broken down to form molecules that help turn off inflammation after an infection or injury. Researchers tested the effectiveness of the omega-3 derivative to see if it could prevent NTHi lung infections in mice. Results proved to be encouraging. The drug was able to reduce the inflammation in the lungs of the mice without suppressing its ability to clear the bacteria. This could allow the new medication to speed up the bacteria cleaning process and clear up the infections faster than other anti-inflammatory drugs.

Further research is needed to see how the compounds can be used in humans. For more information, click here to read the full article from Futurity.org.
Brain Bleed Risk from Warfarin May be Higher than Previously Thought

Warfarin (also known as Coumadin), a widely used blood thinner, may raise the risk of severe bleeding in the brain by quite a bit more than previously believed, according to a recent study. The study examined data from more than 31,000 U.S. Veterans, ages 75 and older, who suffer from atrial fibrillation.

Atrial fibrillation is a common heart rhythm disorder that is often treated with warfarin. Warfarin is found to reduce the risk of stroke by nearly two-thirds in patients with a-fib, according to the lead author of the study, Dr. John Dodson. However, the concern over head trauma from falls makes some clinicians hesitant to prescribe warfarin to their elderly patients.

In order to better understand how common traumatic intracranial bleeding is in clinical practice, Dr. Dodson and his team looked at outcomes from 2002 to 2012 for elderly veterans who all took warfarin for atrial fibrillation. They found that the rates of traumatic intracranial bleeding was much higher than previously reported.

"Nearly one-third of patients experienced more than one episode of traumatic intracranial bleeding," Dodson pointed out, and many patients "also still experienced strokes during this time period."

While studying the outcomes researchers also discovered several factors that could raise bleeding risk: dementia, anemia, depression, use of anticonvulsant drugs and highly variable levels of warfarin in the blood. As this study points out, experts agree that finding the right balance between preventing clots and not raising bleeding rates has always been difficult when it comes to a-fib. It is a problem that doctors have been facing for some time.

"As the elderly population continues to grow, the incidence of conditions like atrial fibrillation also rises. And the mainstay of treatment continues to be blood thinners such as warfarin," said Dr. Richard Temes, director of the Center for Neurocritical Care at North Shore University Hospital in Manhasset, N.Y. "As physicians, we need to carefully weigh the risks of using blood thinners in the elderly population, which is prone to falls and head injury, with the risks of stroke," he said.

Click here to view the full article from HealthDay News.

Planning Guide for Public Health Emergencies Now Available from the CDC

Individuals living in long term, acute and chronic care settings are among the most vulnerable populations during a public health emergency. Therefore, it is important for caregivers and planners who care for these individuals to be prepared and know how to respond in an emergency. To assist in these situations, the CDC has developed a Long Term, Health and Hospice Care Planning Guide for Public Health Emergencies.

This planning guide covers six topics:
- Situational awareness
- Continuity of operations
- Facility or agency operations
- Crisis standards of care
- Staffing
- Fatality management

This guide will assist you with your planning efforts for both public health emergencies and disaster preparedness. To view this guide please click here.

March 2016 Observances

March 20 is World Oral Health Day: Oral health is important to overall health. The World Dental Federation states that 90 percent of the world population will suffer from oral disease in their lifetime. Because of this high incidence rate, they started World Oral Health Day to promote the benefits of a healthy mouth and awareness of oral hygiene issues around the globe. For more information, visit www.worldoralhealthday.com.
This week is National Pulmonary Rehabilitation Week: Organized by the American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation (AACVPR), this weeklong celebration is meant to bring awareness to the role of pulmonary rehabilitation in enhancing the quality of life for people with lung disease. Visit www.aacvpr.org for more information.

This month is National Nutrition Month: Savor the Flavor of Eating Right during National Nutrition Month 2016!! This month-long observation has been celebrated for more than 35 years. Organized by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, this campaign focuses on the importance of making informed food choices and developing healthy eating and activity habits. Click here for more about this year’s event.

This month is National Social Work Month: Social Services professionals play a major role in long term care. These dedicated individuals wear many hats in our centers. The theme for the 2016 celebration is: Forging Solutions out of Challenges. This theme promotes the amazing talent of our nation’s more than 600,000 social workers. They confront some of the most challenging issues facing individuals, families, communities and society and forge solutions that help people reach their full potential and make our nation a better place to live. Take the opportunity sometime this month to show them how much they mean to your community.

This month is Save Your Vision Month: Each March, the American Optometric Association celebrates Save Your Vision Month in order to promote the importance of regular, comprehensive eye care. This year’s campaign focuses on working to educate both employers and employees about how to avoid digital eye strain. For individuals who work in the digital world, starting at a computer screen all day, eye strain can become a legitimate issue. Click here for more information.

AHCA/NCAL Information

AHCA Calls for Delay in PBJ Implementation
Earlier this year, on several occasions, AHCA reached out to CMS to express their concerns about the upcoming implementation of the Payroll Based Journal (PBJ) system. They explained, in great detail, the reasoning behind their concerns and asked that CMS consider delaying the implementation date so that long term care centers could be fully prepared for PBJ reporting. Stay tuned for more on this as it becomes available.

Congressional Briefing
Save the Date for May 23-24!! Please join us in our nation’s capital to help lobby for long term care issues with the Illinois' Congressional Delegation. The headquartered hotel will be the Renaissance Washington. Click here to register. It’s a great opportunity to hear what's happening on the Hill and meet with your Representatives. It’s one that you don’t want to miss!

Upcoming Webinars
- Submit or Face the Consequences: Mandatory Staffing Data Collection Starting July 1st
  March 24, 2016 – 1:00 p.m. CDT
- Understanding Long-Term Care Finance Reform Proposals
  April 13, 2016 – 1:30 p.m. CDT
- So You Think You Might Want to Run for the AHCA or NCAL Board: Everything You Want to Know But Are Afraid to Ask
  April 14, 2016 – 1:30 p.m. CDT

IHCA PAC Information

Save the Date for the IHCA PAC Southern Illinois Golf Outing!!
IHCA PAC brought back the Southern Illinois Golf Outing last year—and it was a hit! Be sure to join us at the beautiful Stonewolf Golf Club in Fairview Heights, IL on Friday, June 17, 2016! Enjoy some fun in the sun with your fellow IHCA members, contribute to the PAC and see how you measure up on Stonewolf’s special Jack Nicklaus Signature course.

Southern Illinois Golf Outing
Stonewolf Golf Club, Fairview Heights, IL
Noon - Lunch  
1:00 p.m. - Shotgun Start 

$100.00 per individual  
$375.00 per foursome  

Sponsorships still available! Click here to view the brochure for more information.

**IHCA Association Information**

**Save the Date for the 19th Annual Resources for Success!!**

This year's annual nursing conference, hosted by IHCA and LTCNA, will be held April 19 & 20 at the Wyndham City Centre in Springfield. Topics will include an overview of the change to the requirements of participation; how to conduct a facility assessment, identifying areas of concern and put a plan in place to correct; ethics; infection control and antibiotic stewardship. Click here to view the brochure and registration form.

**Don't forget about the Resources for Success Expo!!** Want to have access to long term care nurses, DONs, administrators and other decision makers? The Resources for Success Expo allows you to do just that. Space is limited for this two-day event, so reserve your space today! Click here to view the expo prospectus.

**Save the Date for the IHCA Public Policy Forum!!**

IHCA's 3rd Annual Public Policy Forum will be held on April 13, 11:30 a.m. – 3 p.m. Attendees will be informed by IHCA staff of the latest legislative issues including, LTC Medicaid Applications, Managed Care, nursing home cameras and the budget, as well as the status of state and federal regulations. After the forum you can put your knowledge to good use and lobby your state legislators on current issues long term care faces. The day will end at the Legislative Reception, held at the Inn at 835, where you can continue your conversations with legislators and fellow members. Click here to view the brochure! Until then, please don’t hesitate to contact Matt Hartman if you have any questions.

**The Prospectus for the 66th Annual IHCA Expo is Available Online!!**

Want to be a part of one of the best attended long term care events in Illinois? IHCA's 66th Annual Convention and Expo (September 12 – 15, 2016) will be here before you know it! The best locations go fast, so now is the time to reserve your booth space. Click here to view the prospectus. All space is reserved on a first come, first served basis. In order to ensure the best selection for your booth(s), please complete and return the application, Attention: Kelli Showalter, as soon as possible.

**IHCA Member Spotlight**

**Calling IHCA Members – We Want to Feature Your Company Here!!!**

Are you looking for a way to reach our members? Well, this is a great way to do just that! Our Member Spotlight gives our members a space to let us know what their company (or facility) is all about! (And to brag a little too if you want to!) Your Company Information could be seen here in an issue later this year!!

IHCA is proud of our diverse membership and all of your successes and accomplishments. We are always looking for members to feature, here and in our other publications (like LTC Today magazine!). Any IHCA member can be featured in this section—facility, association member company, corporate office—all are welcome!

Ready to sign up for a member spotlight?! Contact Ashley Caldwell! Email acaldwell@ihca.com or give her a call today!