Opioid Use: What Do We Do and How?

Overview of Materials

There are many diverse aspects of pain management. A key aspect is the safe and effective use of analgesics.

This program focuses on a systematic pain management approach as the foundation for safe and effective medication use, including—but not limited to—opioids. It also emphasizes this systematic process to help reduce opioid dependency and abuse by tailoring opioid prescribing to specific situations and optimizing alternative approaches.

It covers two key things in enough detail that facilities and medical practitioners can apply to their practice:

1) key processes and practices that we need to manage pain safely and effectively in the long-term and postacute care facility and
2) how to safely and effectively use and taper opioids in patients who are on them when they come in or might start them while in the facility.

PPT #1 - “Approaches to Opioid Reduction in LTC” covers steps by which any facility can safely and effectively attempt to reduce opioids in individuals who are on opioids.

How to Use:

1) Review PPT #1 to understand the steps to follow and to see actual case examples of successful opioid reduction.
2) Identify residents who are receiving opioids, either recently started or who have been on them for some time.
3) Follow the steps in the accompanying document (Document #1 - Steps to Opioid Reduction_0120), which summarizes the information in the PPT, and tailor the steps to each individual resident to determine, whether, when, how much, and over what period of time, to attempt to reduce or replace their current opioid regimen.

PPT #2 - “Appropriate and Safe Use of Opioids As Part of Effective Pain Management” covers key processes and practices of pain management including (but not limited to) the use of opioids in that context. It also covers many of the issues that challenge nursing home staff and practitioners in trying to manage pain including opioids; for example, what do we do when patients or families request opioids for pain despite our misgivings about whether they are needed; and what information do we need to decide whether to continue opioids for pain and how to adjust the dose?

How to Use:

1) Review PPT #2 to learn more about how you might address the many issues that challenge nursing homes and medical practitioners in trying to manage pain.
2) Use the accompanying document (Document #2 - Opioid Use Issues and Recommendations_0120), which summarizes the information in the PPT, to guide facility approach to pain management and the practices of your staff and practitioners.
3) Use Document #3 (“Opioid Decision-Making Checklist”) as a quick guide for your facility policies and procedures and as a foundation for your facility Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement activities related to pain management and opioid use.