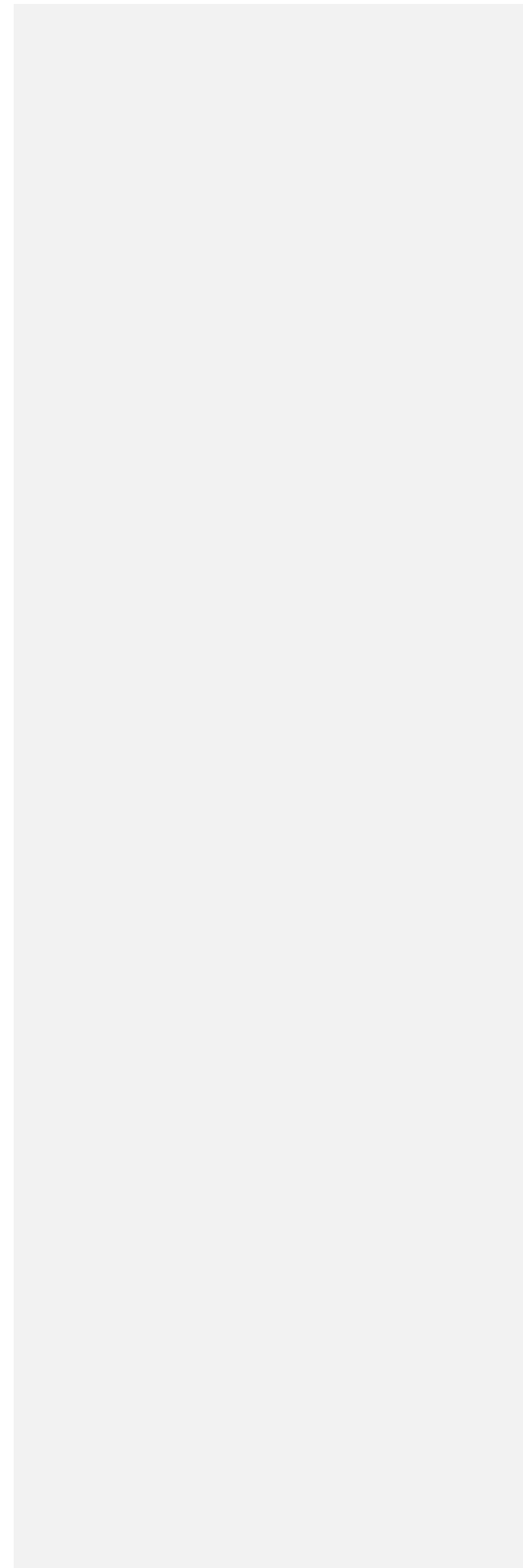


Opiate Painkiller Epidemic in Healthcare

Student Name

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What was once deemed as the future in safe effective pain care management has now become an out of control issue pertaining to the prescription pain medication addiction and abuse epidemic caused by the excessive over prescription of these medications. According to Volkow (2014), “between 26.4 million and 36 million people abuse opioids worldwide, with an estimated 2.1 million people in the United States suffering from substance use disorders related to prescription opioid pain relievers” (para. 9). Volkow (2014) also indicates that this increase in addiction has also resulted in a four fold increase in overdose deaths since 1999. Additionally, according to Perez-Pena (2017), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states more than 25,000 people in the United States died in 2015 from overdosing on opioids like fentanyl, oxycodone and hydrocodone, more than twice as many as a decade earlier. The big question is how did America’s health care system allow itself to be led astray and how did the opiate painkiller epidemic become so large? Prescription pain pill addiction has become a serious public health issue, caused by aggressive marketing of opioids by the pharmacy industry itself, depression and addiction tendencies among the patients being prescribed these medicines, as well as being an effect of the recent economic downturn and chronic unemployment.

One issue that has helped contribute to this epidemic is the aggressive marketing of prescription painkillers by pharmaceutical manufacturers, especially medications such as OxyContin, oxycodone, and fentanyl. Pharmaceutical companies are spending millions of dollars on promotional activities and materials that falsely deny or trivialize the risks of opioids while overstating the benefits of using them for chronic pain (Perez-Pina, 2017). Perez-Pena

Commented [1]: Notice that the introductory paragraph not only identifies the change (increase in opioid addictions) but that it also provides context (when did it happen) and then establishes a clear thesis focusing the paper on the causes of the increase in addiction. Remember that the thesis is a promise to the reader of what is to follow in the body paragraphs.

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(2017) concludes that as the healthcare industry was attempting to more effectively and efficiently treat patients with chronic pain concerns, the pharmaceutical companies were providing funding to prominent doctors, medical societies and patient advocacy groups to win their support for the drugs' use.

Another factor in this increase in opioid addictions has to do with the patients themselves, as well as their economic situation. Patients in America have become so accustomed to taking a pill for everything and they believe that medications can solve all their problem and this kind of thinking has helped contribute to the over prescribing and abuse of opiate pain medications. Many patients, suffering from actual pain and the associated depression that they experience along with this pain and desperate to feed their addiction, are attempting to jump from provider to provider in order to obtain pain medication from multiple sources at the same time. Many of these patients already may suffer from other addictions, which means they may already be more likely to become addicted to the medications they are prescribed. A large contributing factor in the over prescription of pain medication has been the lack of effective electronic prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMP) that can help alleviate diversion, over prescription, and fraudulently prescribed medications (Islam & McRae, 2014). New medications being prescribed such as Suboxone are aimed at helping to treat opiate addictions in patients but are only marginally effective and many times the patients continue to use while on the medication or sell the Suboxone for prescription pain medication obtained from illegal sources.

Economics, according to many experts, also plays a role in the increase in prescription pain reliever addictions. Chronic joblessness, fueled by the Great Recession that hit the United States in 2007, ironically contributes to addiction. According to social work professor Jungeun Olivia Lee, (2017, as cited in Khazan) "the relationship between joblessness and substance

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abuse is strongest among people from low socioeconomic brackets, who might not be able to afford healthier ways to relieve their stress, like gym memberships” (para. 4). Khazan (2017) also reports that for every point the unemployment rate rises, opioid related death rates rise by almost 4 percent. Not only does chronic unemployment make it harder for those suffering from pain to afford alternatives to prescription medications, it further increases depression rates, further contributing to addiction.

Furthermore, patients desperate to feed their addiction are attempting to jump from provider to provider in order to obtain pain medication from multiple sources at the same time. A large contributing factor in the over prescription of pain medication has been the lack of effective electronic prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMP) that can help alleviate diversion, over prescription, and fraudulently prescribed medications (Islam & McRae, 2014). New medications being prescribed such as Suboxone are aimed at helping to treat opiate addictions in patients but are only marginally effective and many times the patients continue to use while on the medication or sell the Suboxone for prescription pain medication obtained from illegal sources.

Prescription pain medication addiction in the United States continues to grow daily and is one dilemma that must be aggressively handled before it is unstoppable. Every day in the United States the number of overdoses from opiate prescription pain pills is skyrocketing and shows no signs of slowing down.

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Commented [4]: Do remember that the assignment asks for 3-4 sources. This paper does exceed that requirement, which may indicate a slight dependence on sources. Try to stay within the specific assignment requirements and limitations.

