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VA Accelerates Deployment of Nationwide Opioid Therapy Tool

Allows VA Providers to Review Pain Treatment Data in One Place to Help Protect Patients

Washington – The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is accelerating the deployment of a state-of-the-art tool to help protect Veteran patients using high doses of opioids or with medical risk factors that put them at an increased risk of complications from opioid medications.

The tool, referred to as the **Opioid Therapy Risk Report**, is being made available now to all staff in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Over the past week, VA's Interim Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Carolyn Clancy, has reached out to over 2,000 primary care providers in VHA clinics throughout the country to promote the use of this novel tool. It includes information about the dosages of narcotics and other sedative medications, significant medical problems that could contribute to an adverse reaction and monitoring data to aid in the review and management of complex patients.

"All of American medicine is aiming to better understand how to treat severe pain, and Veterans receiving care in the VA health care system typically suffer from higher rates of chronic pain than the general public," said Dr. Clancy. "While opioid medications may be appropriate in some cases of chronic pain, we are dedicated to using them safely and providing effective pain care to our Veterans. It is critical that we ensure system-wide implementation of the Opioid Therapy Risk Report in the weeks ahead."

The Opioid Therapy Risk Report allows VA providers to review all pertinent clinical data related to pain treatment in one place, providing a comprehensive Veteran-centered and more efficient level of management not previously available to primary care providers. VHA is actively deploying training aids to providers and facilities now and over the next several weeks to familiarize them with how to utilize this tool in their daily practice.

Overuse and abuse of prescription opioids is a significant public health issue, particularly since patients in pain are at risk for potential negative outcomes including unintended overdose, adverse medical reactions, and mental health complications. VA established the Opioid Safety Initiative (OSI) in 2012 to enhance safe and effective pain care for Veterans. As a result, there are currently:

- 91,614 fewer patients receiving opioids;
- 29,281 fewer patients receiving opioids and benzodiazepines together;
- 71,255 more patients on opioids that have had a urine drug screen to help guide treatment decisions;
- 67,466 fewer patients on long-term opioid therapy

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