

Transcript Details

This is a transcript of an educational program. Details about the program and additional media formats for the program are accessible by visiting: <https://reachmd.com/programs/medical-industry-feature/overcoming-challenges-treating-patients-at-risk-for-drug-misuse/13612/>

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Overcoming Challenges Treating Patients at Risk for Drug Misuse

ReachMD Announcer:

Welcome to ReachMD. This medical industry feature, titled “Overcoming Challenges When Treating Patients at Risk for Drug Misuse” is sponsored by Quest Diagnostics.

Here’s your host, Dr Jeff Gudin.

Dr. Gudin:

Hi, I’m Dr. Jeff Gudin, Professor of Pain Management at University of Miami, and also a senior medical advisor to the Quest Diagnostics drug monitoring and toxicology franchise. Today I’m gonna talk about some of the key challenges clinicians are facing when treating patients at risk for drug misuse, and even more importantly, how we can overcome them.

First, let’s look at treating these patients in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. We know that preventive medical services like drug testing were put on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic, and who suffered but the patients with chronic pain, substance-use disorders, and mental health conditions? They were at greater risk for drug misuse. And it’s understandable, but we need to get back to routine drug monitoring services. You know, we did a report called “Health Trends,” where we interviewed 500 primary care physicians about their thoughts on drug testing and the current state of the drug crisis. They found that they were worried that patients would turn to illicit fentanyl – street drugs – if they weren’t able to get their pain medicines. They noted that the CDC saw more than 100,000 deaths in the last year, mostly due to synthetic drugs like fentanyl, and when we looked at our own data from Quest, we saw a 35% increase in non-prescribed fentanyl, just in the starting weeks of the pandemic. By the way, there was also a 44% increase for heroin.

So we know the pandemic wasn’t good for our drug abuse crisis. Given that data, it’s important to understand that clinical drug testing is critical to preventing drug misuse. In fact, data from our survey, the Health Trend survey, when we asked clinicians, more than 80% agreed that drug testing was critical to preventing drug misuse and to preventing overdose deaths.

I’ll tell you something else interesting – we talked to doctors who were doing medicine by telemedicine, versus in-patient, in-person visits, and their level of confidence in detecting drug misuse varied based on where the patient was seen. For in-office, 90% or more of clinicians said they felt confident in recognizing drug misuse, but that number was only 50% for telemedicine.

With all of that being said, drug testing is a critical tool that clinicians need to understand how to utilize. It detects drug misuse. It helps you monitor your patients’ medication adherence. It provides a complement to the states’ prescription drug monitoring database. It helps protect your practice, and protect your patients. Not only that, it’s expected by most prescribing and medical board guidelines. Urine or saliva drug testing can identify prescription drug use, can detect illicit drug use, can identify potential drug-drug interactions, and again, will keep your practice safe.

So in summary, clinical drug testing is the only objective tool that we have to determine what substances a patient is actually taking. And thus, it’s important to include drug testing as a critical component of your patient management. Thank you for joining us.

ReachMD Announcer:

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