

Talking to Patients about Chronic Pain and Opioid Risk

<p style="text-align: center;">Having "The Conversation"</p> <p>Tip: Choose your tools based on your patient's level of resistance/readiness</p> <hr/> <p><u>Helpful Statements:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ What would you like to have happen today? ✓ I am committed to helping you with your pain mgmt plan. ✓ I know you have real pain. ✓ Our goal is to help you function better and live a better quality of life. ✓ Good mood mgmt is good pain mgmt. ✓ Opioid withdrawal is self-limiting and not life-threatening. The symptoms can feel pretty awful sometimes, but they're not physically dangerous and we can help you manage them. 	<p>LESS RESISTANT: use realistic, supportive and Motivational Interviewing talk.</p> <p><i>At best, medications can only address 30-50% of chronic pain. You will need a comprehensive pain mgmt plan.</i></p> <p><i>Living with pain is difficult, but I believe you can have a better quality of life.</i></p> <p><i>A person with chronic pain is like a car with four flat tires. Medications can fill one of those tires. But to really get moving, to have better functioning and Quality of Life for the long run, you will need to take a wrap-around approach. I'd like to help you with that.</i></p> <p><i>So part of you does not like the effects of this medication and would like to take less of it. What is the biggest barrier to trying a change? What part of making a change worries you the most? On a scale of 0 to 10, how important do you think it is to find other ways to manage this pain? From 0 to 10, how ready are you to try a different approach? What would help you get that closer to a [8, 9]? What can I do to help?</i></p> <p><i>I want to support you to become the expert manager of your pain program.</i></p> <p><i>I'd like to hear your ideas about where you think we need to go from here... With your permission I'd like to share my recommendations with you.</i></p>	<p>VERY RESISTANT: be direct and clear about limits.</p> <p><i>I'm committed to working with you to manage your pain. I need you to know that if you are not able to keep to the regimen we discussed, I will not be willing to continue prescribing this medication.</i></p> <p><i>I cannot responsibly continue to prescribe opioids because I feel that they are causing you more harm than good.</i></p> <p><i>I can see that you are really struggling with the pain. But sometimes the things we do to control pain are actually more dangerous than the pain itself. The choices you're making now are actually putting you in danger, and I cannot support that.</i></p> <p><i>Unfortunately, the way you have been using this medication has actually become <u>a barrier</u> to safe and effective pain management.</i></p> <p><i>I hear what you're saying. Unfortunately we may have to agree to disagree about this.</i></p> <p><i>Many people have real pain AND addiction [or, AND real problems regulating their medication use]. A good pain management plan has to balance safety and effectiveness. If the risks outweigh the benefits, it's not good medicine.</i></p> <p><i>I would like to work with you to find better ways to manage your pain and need for pain medications.</i></p>
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When to consider adding psychological support:

- 1) Some anxiety or irritability is normal when patients with pain are being considered for an opioid taper. However, if a patient conveys severe anxiety or anger about taper, consider adding psychological support to the process.
- 2) Patient has a history of suicidal ideation or attempts.
- 3) Patient has a history of addiction or is currently abusing substances.
- 4) Patient's only tool for pain mgmt has been opioids.
- 5) Patient expresses interest in integrative pain mgmt

Discussing behavioral health referrals:

Coping skills are a first-line treatment for any chronic illness. I would like to bring in a colleague who can help with that.

I think you could use a higher level of support for your pain. I'd like to take a team approach.

Chronic pain is very stressful, and stress can in turn increase pain. To take a comprehensive approach to your care, I'd like to connect you with a colleague who specializes in managing stress and anxiety.