

"Your Staff is Treating Me Like a Drug Addict."

SCOPE of Pain *Colleague to Colleague* Audio Short: #7

Welcome back to the SCOPE of Pain Audio Shorts Series. This is Dr. Daniel Alford, Professor of Medicine and Course Director for the Boston University School of Medicine SCOPE of Pain Program.

Your long-term patient who is stable on chronic low-dose opioids for chronic pain complains that he feels like the front desk and lab staff treat him like a heroin addict. How do you address this patient's concerns?

This case highlights the importance of not only setting up uniform guideline-based practice policies and procedures around safe opioids prescribing, but also the need to adequately train the entire healthcare team in maintaining a clinical patient-centered approach when implementing these procedures.

Much of the focus in national guidelines is ensuring that clinicians use patient/provider agreements, monitor patients using urine drug testing, and routinely check the state prescription drug monitoring program. But very little attention is devoted to how you do this in a way that's patient-centered.

This is especially important in caring for patients with chronic pain, many of whom are distrustful of the medical system, and some of whom may have felt that they were treated poorly in the past.

It is important that the healthcare team understand their role as healthcare providers and not as judges, police officers or DEA agents. It is important for patients to be treated as patients and not as suspects or criminals. Involving the entire healthcare team is critical as safe opioid prescribing is a lot of work.

Healthcare team training is critical and needs to be an ongoing process due to staff turnover and decline of skills over time. It might be helpful to engage staff in role-play exercises, so they can practice talking to patients in a non-judgmental manner.

Effective communication strategies and optimizing team-based implementation of safe opioid prescribing practices are all addressed in the SCOPE of Pain program. You're not alone in facing these challenging issues. Thanks for listening.

Be sure to check back often, as new Audio Shorts will be added throughout the year.

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