The Opioid Epidemic and Surgical Patients

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Abstract

In the United States, the opioid epidemic has ravaged across our nation at an inexplicable rate and is only continuing to rise. From 1999-2014, over 165,000 people died from prescription-related overdoses (Torres, et. al, 2017). This irrational opioid use has led to not only excessive drug misuse but increased mortality rates and huge economic burdens (Zhao, et. al, 2019). Since 1999, opioid prescribing has more than quadrupled and risen in parallel with the number of overdoses from prescribed opiate agents. Despite the increase in minimally invasive surgeries and alternative pain modality options; opioid analgesics remain at the core of post-operative pain regimens. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the impact of the opioid epidemic on surgical patients through exploration of the causes, risk factors, preventive strategies and reflection on my clinical work. My project provides in-depth discussion into a comprehensive set of current evidence-based research that is geared at how the healthcare world can address this pressing issue. This project has truly deepened my understanding into the opioid epidemic ravaging across the U.S. I have developed an invaluable tool kit of knowledge that has heightened my ability to not only collaborate with surgeons but to identify and educate at-risk patients as well. Furthermore, I have strengthened my voice and awareness in advocating for this at-risk population within my own practice and across my community.

Reference