Community Care of North Carolina (CCNC), in conjunction with non-profit organization Project Lazarus, is responding to some of the highest drug overdose death rates in the country. In the past decade, there are increasing indicators that the misuse and abuse of prescription opioid analgesics by patients contributes to this epidemic. This Primary Care Physician Toolkit is one of three resource documents created through this collaboration to assist medical care providers throughout North Carolina in managing patients with chronic pain. Similar Toolkits have been created for CCNC Care Managers and hospital Emergency Departments.

While Project Lazarus is initially targeting Medicaid patients, the recommended tools and strategies are useful for any patient struggling with pain issues. Medical care providers are encouraged to adopt the practices and policies in this Toolkit for all patients, regardless of payment source.

While doctors and nurses play a major role in treating chronic pain and preventing overdose deaths, the responsibility for action goes beyond the clinic. Project Lazarus is working to engage the entire community in preventing overdoses. This public health model is centered on community coalitions tailored to each locality. The model uses data from state health surveillance systems to get a clearer understanding of the nature of the overdose problem and engages doctors and nurses in both prevention of opioid abuse and optimal treatment of chronic pain. This public health model has been proven to produce results in North Carolina, including both dramatic and sustained decreases in prescription opioid overdose, and improved access to appropriate opioid pain treatment.

The goals of Project Lazarus are to reduce opioid-related overdoses, optimize treatment of chronic pain and manage substance abuse issues associated with opioid misuse. Many people who have problems with opioid use also have legitimate needs for adequate pain control. Education around safe prescribing and appropriate use of opioids in our health care system and communities will enhance pain control and prevent unnecessary injury and death for our citizens in North Carolina. Some notes on specific sections of this Toolkit:

- Opioids in the Management of Chronic Pain: This five-page overview provides a concise review of chronic pain issues and regulations and outlines key tools for managing the care of patients with chronic pain patients.
- Assessment and Management Algorithms: These flowcharts summarize the optimal processes for assessing and managing chronic pain.
- Pain (opioid) Management Agreement: This agreement is helpful in clarifying patient guidelines and protecting the provider from prescribing to drug-seeking patients. CCNC recommends its use with patients for whom opioids are prescribed.
- Chronic Pain Progress Note: This form provides a convenient record of the pain visits and a helpful reminder of questions to ask regarding risk factors for opioid misuse. © Community Care of North Carolina October 2012 Pg. 4
- Medication Flowsheet: This flowsheet is intended to serve as a comprehensive record of a patient’s opioid medication history. By briefly checking this form, providers can quickly determine how many chronic pain medicines the patient has been prescribed, as well as trends in dosage.
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*Full Access is Available at:*  

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