MercyOne providers prepare to implement stricter guidelines, reduce opioid abuse

MercyOne Central Iowa providers and colleagues are busy preparing for the next line of attack in combating the opioid crisis – electronic prescribing.

Anticipated to help decrease abuse and increase monitoring of controlled substances, the effort is part of a mandate by the Iowa Legislature and Governor Reynolds in which all prescriptions (controlled and non-controlled substances) must be transmitted electronically from prescriber to pharmacy, beginning Jan. 1, 2020.

In addition, the Iowa Board of Medicine now requires Iowa physicians and their designated agents who prescribe opioids to register with a Prescription Monitoring Program. This directive is designed to help address what is commonly known as “doctor shopping,” or when a patient attempts to see multiple medical providers in hopes of securing more opioids.

To enact the changes, members of the MercyOne Des Moines Informatics Department and provider support coordinators are undertaking the monumental task of meeting one-on-one with each of the more than 300 clinic physicians and 1,200 hospital medical staff to set up electronic authentication through Allscripts and Cerner.

“E-prescribing requires we onboard each provider individually to ensure security and understanding of the new process,” said Dr. Joel Ward, chair of Clinical IT for MercyOne Central Iowa and physician advisor for MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center. “The system also requires a secondary authentication system.”

Not everyone who is prescribed medication will become addicted. However, excess pills are a contributing factor as they often end up in the hands of persons struggling with addiction. According to the Iowa Department of Public Health, more than half of those who misuse or abuse prescription medications say they got the drugs from family or friends. Misuse and abuse are often the first steps toward addiction and overdose – four in five new heroin users started out misusing prescription painkillers.

While e-prescribing takes 20 seconds longer per patient on average than writing out a prescription, overall time is saved because prescribers spend less time...

“Electronic prescribing of controlled substances will help protect both providers and patients from prescription abuse.”

- Dr. Joel Ward

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Have a healthy holiday – give yourself the gift of self-care

The holidays are supposed to be a time of love, laughter and cheer. Unfortunately, that’s not always the case. Challenging family dynamics, dealing with the loss of a loved one or managing an unwanted change can stress you out.

There are a few things you can try to help make navigating the holidays a little easier this year. Licensed mental health counselor at MercyOne Comfort Health Center for Women, Melissa Cribari, suggests:

- **Practice random acts of kindness.** Get into the season of giving. No act of kindness is too small. Compliment or thank the harried grocery clerk. Let someone else have the parking spot near the door. Doing good will make you feel good, or at least feel better.

- **Take care of yourself.** It’s especially important to get enough sleep, eat right and get some exercise every day when stressed. Self-care is not selfish; it’s investing in yourself in order to be able to give to those around you.

- **Everything in moderation.** Be mindful of your own weaknesses when it comes to holiday indulgences such as alcohol or sweet treats. Listen to your body to avoid post-holiday event regret or an extra five pounds.

- **Reach out.** Feeling lonely or overwhelmed? Be proactive in seeking help. Connect with friends or attend your house of worship. If professional help is needed, MercyOne Des Moines Behavioral Health Care provides hope and help for individuals struggling with mental health illness and substance abuse problems. Crisis assistance is available 24/7 by calling 515-271-6111.

Shine this Christmas

On Tuesday, Dec. 3, MercyOne Des Moines Auxiliary welcomed the holiday season during the sixth annual “Shine this Christmas” tree lighting ceremony at MercyOne Des Moines Medical Center.

The event helps to raise funds through the sale of virtual lights and packages tagged in honor or memory of a loved one, to be displayed for the holiday season.
Inaugural physician Society of St. Luke Award honorees: Marshall Greiman, MD and Stephen Nowak, DO

Almost 30 years ago, two MercyOne Central Iowa physicians began their journey — healing the sick and serving the community. Like St. Paul and his “beloved physician” St. Luke, they immersed themselves in a lifetime of ministering to those in need. Marshall Greiman, MD, and Stephen Nowak, DO, chose to follow the patron saint of physicians and surgeons and emulate the divine healer Jesus Christ in their practice of medicine. They now have the distinction of being the inaugural recipients of the MercyOne Central Iowa Society of St. Luke Award.

Drs. Greiman and Nowak humbly accepted their award at a recent meeting of their peers. Dr. Nowak used the opportunity to thank his colleagues saying, “Many of you at some time have helped me with a patient and I thank you for helping me.” Dr. Greiman shared, “I don’t feel worthy of receiving this award. I have the privilege of working alongside many of you and have seen the excellence and care with which you care for your patients.”

Both physicians have made significant impressions on colleagues. At MercyOne Ankeny Family Medicine Clinic, it’s said Dr. Nowak stresses empathetic care to provide for the clinical, personal and spiritual needs of patients. He also advises new providers “to treat patients as though they were Jesus and you are washing their feet.” Staff share Dr. Nowak always listens to his patients, often placing a hand on their shoulder to “re-enforce they aren’t alone. Clinic colleagues also benefit from a listening ear — or Dr. Nowak frequent picking up an extra shift due to staff illness or to lighten the load that a full urgent care waiting room brings.

At MercyOne Clive ENT Care Clinic, a colleague shared, “Not only could I tell [Dr. Greiman] loves caring for the sick and injured, he also is constantly pouring out his knowledge to patients and others.” Dr. Greiman prayed with the colleague when his baby daughter spent 103 days in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). The father said the care, concern and faith helped strengthen him. Many patients express similar feelings of caring, being valued and listened to.

As a grandfather, Dr. Greiman says he has become even more committed to compassionate and collaborative care since his three-year-old granddaughter’s leukemia diagnosis. “Seeing through my granddaughter and daughter’s eyes I have rediscovered the tremendous privilege and sacred calling each of us has been given as physicians and providers,” he shared. “Each patient we see is someone’s son or daughter, wife or husband, mother or father. Each person bears God’s fingerprints, they have been created in His image and have been entrusted to me to care for.”

For Dr. Nowak, serving as medical director of his clinic was important. He confided, “I did it so that when I look back I know I did everything I could to make the clinic and the community a better place.” He is thankful for his career decision. “It feels wonderful to have something you love so much, love you back.”

Congratulations to Drs. Greiman and Nowak and to all the 40 physician nominees for this honor.