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# 10 THINGS ABOUT: PRESCRIPTION DRUG MONITORING PROGRAMS (PMPs)

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1. A prescription drug monitoring program (PMP) is a state-run electronic database that stores and analyzes information on the prescribing and dispensing of controlled substances. The general purpose of a PMP is two-fold: 1) to reduce misuse and diversion of controlled substances and 2) to improve patient safety.
2. Prescription monitoring programs are now available in all 50 states along with the District of Columbia. Many states now also participate in the NABP (National Association of Boards of Pharmacy) PMP Interconnect which allows prescribers to access information from other states' databases.
3. Those who are authorized to access and use PMP data typically include prescribers and dispensers; law enforcement agencies; representatives of professional or occupational boards, and directors of state commissions or agencies.
4. A growing number of states are now requiring that physicians access the PMP prior to prescribing controlled substances. Penalties for failure to do so range from fines to loss of licensure to imprisonment.
5. Even if you are not required to access your state's PMP before prescribing, you should consider doing so. By viewing the database, you can ascertain whether your patients are refilling prescriptions on schedule, or whether they are obtaining medications from other physicians that might pose a dangerous interaction or impact the efficacy of the medications you've prescribed.
6. Patients who are completely honest and trustworthy can sometimes forget to mention other prescriptions or misstate the names of those medications. By the same token it is often patients who seem to be the most trustworthy who are abusing prescriptions.
7. Although reviewing PMP data may not be required by law, the fact that the ability to do so exists may affect the standard of care. There may come a point where accessing the PMP becomes as routine as checking a patient's blood pressure.
8. Checking the PMP and letting prospective patients know that you will do so helps to discourage drug-seekers from scheduling appointments. Note, however, that state law may preclude you from accessing data on an individual *before* he or she is seen as a patient.

9. As states often have very strict laws about who may access PMP information and how it may be disclosed, you should NOT print out reports and put them in patient charts (unless you are required to do so by your individual state) lest they be inadvertently re-disclosed.
  
10. Unless your state's law specifically requires it, you should not automatically report a patient whom you believe to be obtaining multiple prescriptions or fraudulently obtaining them. Remember, you still must maintain patient confidentiality unless legally compelled not to.



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