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Aligning Opioid Prescribing Pathways

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In 2016, there were 378 opioid overdose deaths in the State of Maine, illustrating the drug epidemic that is sweeping the state, as well as the nation, and continues worsen with each passing year. In attempt to prevent opiate abuse, the Maine Legislature passed Public Law Chapter 488 on January 1, 2017, which acts to strengthen the controlled substances prescription monitoring program. With this new legislation, came a new set of guidelines and protocols that would need to be implemented by pharmacists and opioid prescribers around the state, including Maine Medical Center (MMC).

**Baseline Metrics/Current State:**

![Graph showing Maine drug overdose deaths]

**Current State:** Public Law Chapter 488 makes 4 main changes to opioid prescribing:
1. Mandates the use of the State’s Prescription Monitoring Program and expands those who use it
2. Enacts strict limits on opioid prescribing for acute and chronic pain
3. Mandates education for opioid prescribers
4. Mandates electronic prescribing of opioids

**Old Practice:** There were no prior limits in opioid prescribing, required by state law. Prescribers were doing as they had always done.

**New Practice:** Public Law Chapter 488

Root Cause Analysis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Root Cause</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilitates from opioid induced drug overdoses reached an all-time high in Maine for 2016</td>
<td>There is considerable societal stigma that addiction is not a disease, therefore preventative measures are not seen to be as important.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Why?</td>
<td>Due to the multifactorial schema of addiction, increasing the stringency of policies for opioid prescribers will not solve the entire problem. However, making sure that all prescriptions for opioids are in compliance with these new standards is a step in the right direction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why?</td>
<td>Patients are poorly educated about the dangers of taking opioids long term</td>
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Next Steps:

- For MMC: There is ongoing prescriber education whenever instances of noncompliance with Chapter 488 arise, in an attempt to decrease the incidence of unwarranted prescription opioids
- For the state of Maine and the nation: Develop a continuous discourse about addiction as a disease, in an attempt to alleviate the associated stigma