

The epidemic within the pandemic

Drug testing, as well as other preventive services have, in many cases, been put on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic



During the pandemic, patients with chronic pain, substance use disorders, and mental health conditions are at particular risk for alcohol and drug overuse and misuse. Routine drug monitoring services could play a critical role in managing care.

1

Impact of the pandemic on patients

Uncertainty about the coronavirus, concerns about family members and finances, isolation and disruptions to daily life are leading to increased anxiety and depression.

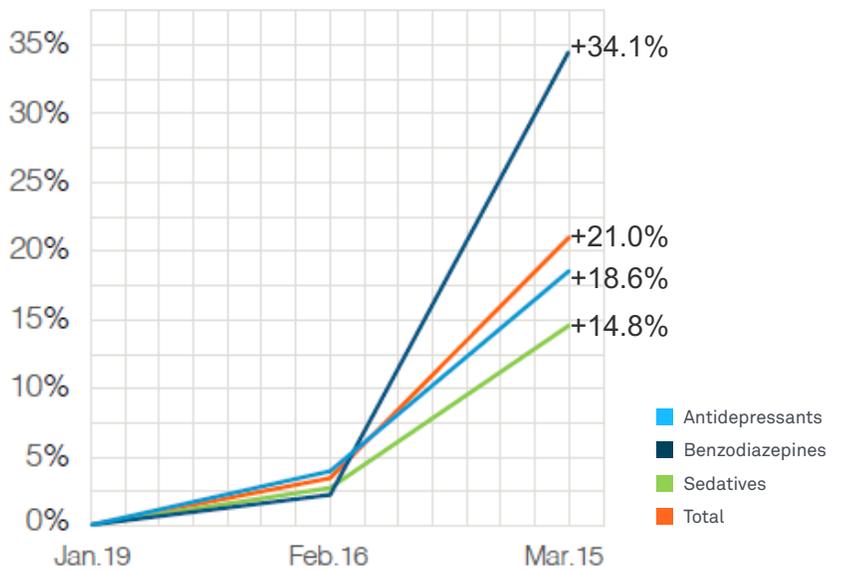
- These events can increase the risk of substance misuse, such as extensive drinking or drug use, as a coping mechanism¹
- The risk for substance misuse is likely to vary based on predisposing factors

The impact of the pandemic on patients with mental health conditions and patients at risk for substance misuse disorder

COVID-19 has impacted prescriptions for mental health treatment

Anxiety and depression related to COVID-19 may persist after the pandemic subsides. There has been a significant rise in the use of antidepressants and other medications for mental health disorders.

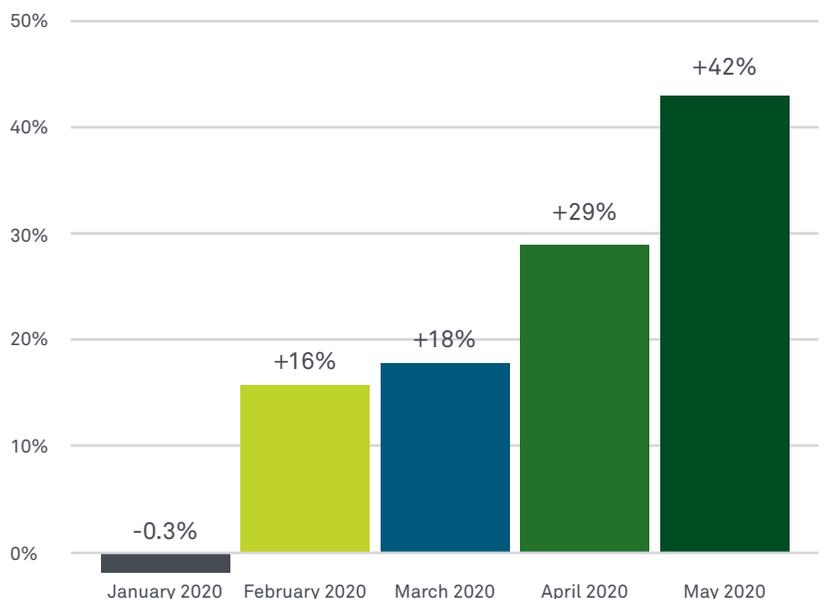
Percent change in prescriptions filled per week for mental health medications³



Monthly overdoses have grown dramatically during the pandemic

Overdoses^a increased up to 42% per month during the pandemic, as compared to the same months in 2019.⁴

Percent (%) increase in overdoses year-over-year^b



^aSuspected overdoses nationally—not all fatal

^bPercent increase references the 1,201 agencies reporting to ODMAP by January 2019. Source: ODMAP

2

Important risk factors to consider

Clinicians who treat patients with chronic pain, substance use disorders, or mental health conditions need to understand their patient's history and previous diagnosis:

- Personal history of substance misuse
- Family history of substance misuse
- Previous diagnosis of anxiety, depression, or bipolar disorders

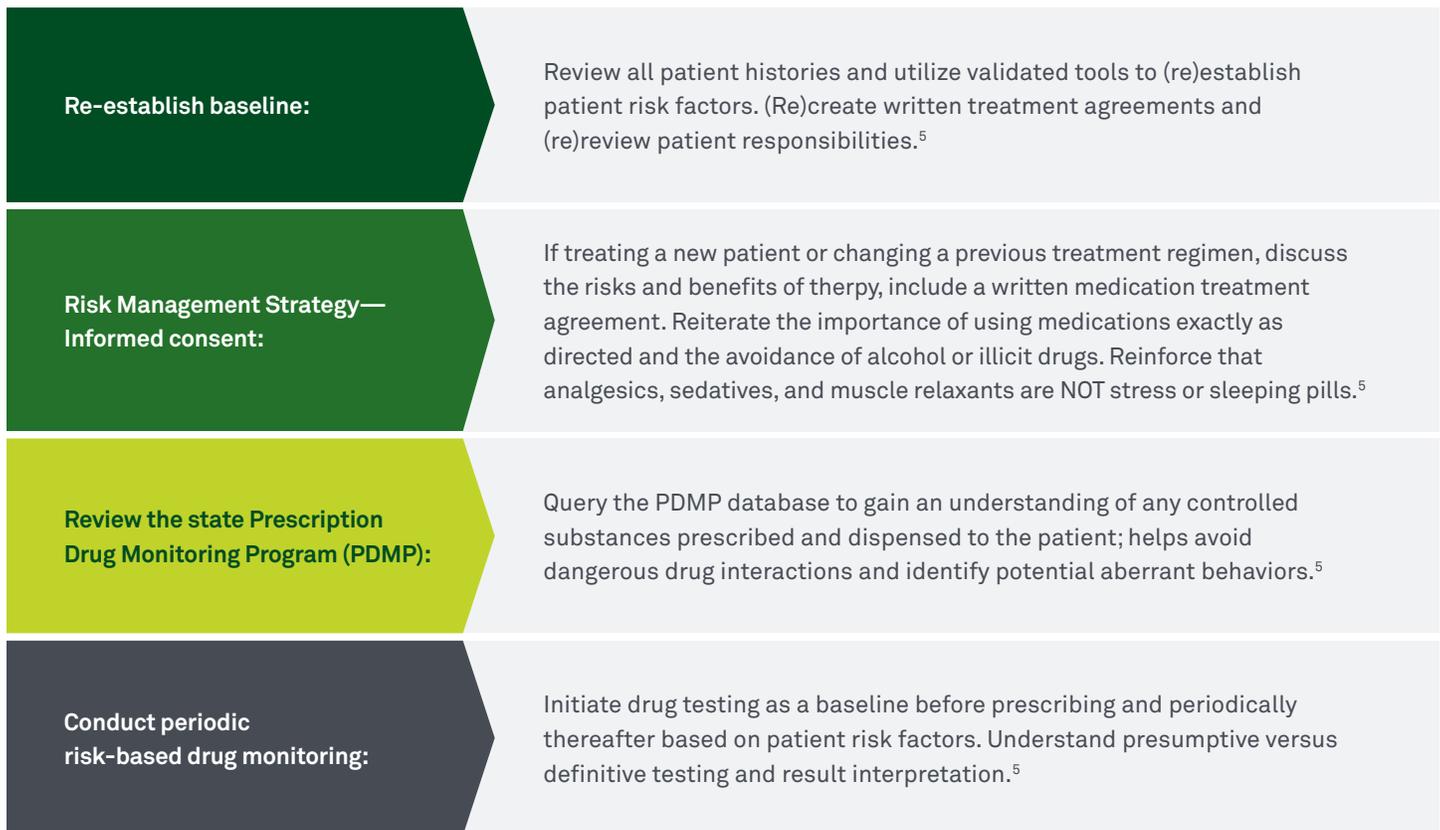
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Historical data

Psychological disorders and substance misuse increase in the aftermath of both man-made and natural disasters:

- **In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, “survivors were smoking cigarettes, consuming alcohol, and experiencing alcohol consumption-related problems at a substantially higher rate,” according to a 2006 study by researchers at the University of South Carolina.² Data showed hospitalizations for alcohol use rose 35% following Hurricane Katrina**

Establishing a baseline with your patients who are prescribed controlled substances



Adapted from Adler JA and Jackson WC. Implementing a prescription drug monitoring protocol to ensure responsible opioid prescribing. *Pain Medicine News*. September 2018.

Why drug monitoring?

Drug monitoring can play an important role in helping to keep everyone safe—you, your patient, your practice, and your community.



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References

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