

Patient Consultation Talk Tracks

How you communicate with your patients is critical to helping them understand their risks and take the right steps to avoid an adverse opioid episode. Tips for communicating with patients:

- Ask open-ended questions
- Be empathetic
- Actively listen to what they say
- Use plain language- avoid jargon
- Include written materials so patients can review information later

The below talk-tracks will help you frame your conversations with your patients.

MODERATE-RISK PATIENTS (RISK CLASS: 4 AND 5)

Pharmacist: Hello! It's nice to see you again, _____ (Patient name). How are you doing today?

Patient:

Pharmacist: If you have a few minutes, I wanted to discuss your medications with you. Before we begin, are there any concerns you want to address?

Patient:

Pharmacist: [Address patient concerns]. It looks like you are currently prescribed opioids. How is _____ (name of opioid) working for you?

(Patients are not always aware they are taking opioids. Explain to the patients what opioids are, how it affects them, and why they are a safety concern)

Patient:

Pharmacist: Okay, and can you remind me why you are taking this medication?

Patient:

Pharmacist: Do you think this medication is helping you cope with your pain for _____ (Cause of pain)?

Patient: Yes

OR

Patient: No. My pain isn't controlled.

(Assess patient's pain and take necessary action)

Pharmacist: How has your pain been lately? Do you monitor it regularly? (Ask patient to rate the pain as per the Pain Zone Tool) *(Pain Zone Resource)*

(Have you considered keeping a pain journal to see if there are any patterns/ times of day when your pain is worse?)

Patient:

Pharmacist: Do you experience any side effects while on this prescription?



Patient:

Pharmacist: *If listed side effects are normal: "Side effects to watch out for are _____ (list of regular side effects for opioids- constipation, sedation etc.). These are completely normal and it is not unusual for you to be experiencing them.

However, if it disrupts your daily activities or worries you, even if it is minor, please let me know and we will figure out a solution together. (Stool softeners/ OTC supplements)

If it is not normal, inquire for more information: "How often would you say side effects occur and how does it affect you?"

Use patient handout to explain to patient what side effects they may experience

Pharmacist: Moving on, I'd like to talk about ways to stay safe while taking opioid pain medicines. Opioids can sometimes be misused, and even addicting, so as precaution, I want to ensure that will not be the case for you.

Refer to the chart for specific risks for patients and convey factors contributing to their added risks

You know yourself and your body best, so keep an eye out if you are experiencing any unusual symptoms. It may be the medication causing it. Feel free to immediately contact me if that is the case.

Pharmacist:

It makes sense that your current medication is helping you with your pain, as it is supposed to. But just in case of any severe effects including overdose while on the medication, we think you can benefit from having access to this medication (Naloxone). Naloxone will reverse the effects of an adverse effect and can save your life so we highly recommend you have it with you. Should we dispense the medication for you?

Patient: yes/no

Pharmacist: *Find out why the patient refused.* I understand, may I ask why?

If the patients purchases the Naloxone, explain how/when to use it.

Closing

Pharmacist: I would like to follow-up with you within the next few weeks, so let's schedule a day and time. If at any point you feel as though the medications are not working well and you want to explore other options, I'd be more than happy to do that with you. We will work on this together. We also want you to have this (Patient Safety Information Resource).

Pharmacist: Are there any other questions or concerns I can address before we end?

Patient:

Pharmacist: Great! Thank you for your time today. Remember I am here if you need anything at all. I'll see you soon.



HIGH-RISK PATIENTS (RISK CLASS: 6 AND 7)

Pharmacist: Hello! It's nice to see you again, _____ (Patient name). How are you doing today?

Patient:

Pharmacist: If you have a few minutes, I wanted to discuss your medications with you. Before we begin, are there any concerns you want to address?

Patient:

Pharmacist: [Address patient concerns]. It looks like you are currently prescribed opioids. How is _____ (name of opioid) working for you?

(Patients are not always aware they are taking opioids. Explain to the patients what opioids are, how it affects them, and why they are a safety concern)

Patient:

Pharmacist: Okay, and can you remind me why you are taking this medication?

Patient:

Pharmacist: Do you think this medication is helping you cope with your pain for _____ (Cause of pain)?

Patient: Yes

OR

Patient: No. My pain isn't controlled.

(Assess patient's pain and take necessary action)

Pharmacist: How has your pain been lately? Do you monitor it regularly? (Ask patient to rate the pain as per the Pain Zone Tool) *(Pain Zone Resource)*

(Have you considered keeping a pain journal to see if there are any patterns/ times of day when your pain is worse?)

Patient:

Pharmacist: Do you experience any side effects while on this prescription?

Patient:

Pharmacist: *If listed side effects are normal: "Side effects to watch out for are _____ (list of regular side effects for opioids- constipation, sedation etc.). These are completely normal and it is not unusual for you to be experiencing them.

However, if it disrupts your daily activities or worries you, even if it is minor, please let me know and we will figure out a solution together. (Stool softeners/ OTC supplements)

If it is not normal, inquire for more information: "How often would you say side effects occur and how does it affect you?"

Use patient handout to explain to patient what side effects they may experience



Pharmacist: Moving on, I'd like to talk about ways to stay safe while taking opioid pain medicines. Opioids can sometimes be misused, and even addicting, so as precaution, I want to ensure that will not be the case for you. Since you are taking what is considered high dosage of opioids, I want to make sure you are so keeping an eye out for any unusual symptoms. It may be the medication causing it.

Refer to the chart for specific risks for patients and inform the patient about factors contributing to their added risks

Please remember to not exceed the number of pills prescribed to you. This could be very dangerous. If your pain isn't being controlled, we can always discuss ways to control it better.

Pharmacist:

It makes sense that your current medication is helping you with your pain, as it is supposed to. But just in case of any severe effects including overdose while on the medication, we think you can benefit from having access to this medication (Naloxone). Naloxone will reverse the effects of an adverse effect and can save your life so we highly recommend you have it with you. Should we dispense the medication for you?

Patient: yes/no

Pharmacist: *Find out why the patient refused.* I understand, may I ask why?

If the patients purchases the Naloxone, explain how/when to use it.

Closing

Pharmacist: I would like to follow-up with you within the next few weeks so let's schedule a day and time. If at any point you feel as though the medications are not working well and you want to explore other options, I'd be more than happy to do that with you. We will work on this together. We also want you to have this (Patient Safety Information Resource).

Pharmacist: Are there any other questions or concerns I can address before we end?

Patient:

Pharmacist: Great! Thank you for your time today. Remember I am here if you need anything at all. I'll see you soon.