

HARRISBURG, Pa., Sept. 27, 2018 – Noting the connection between dental care and opioid prescriptions, United Concordia Dental is educating and collaborating with dentists to help them better understand the alternatives to opioid-based prescriptions when treating pain.

“Many people receive their first opioid prescriptions from a dentist,” said Dr. Quinn Dufurrena, D.D.S., J.D., United Concordia’s chief dental officer. “Often, these prescriptions are written for young patients who are having wisdom teeth removed. Opiates aren’t the only option for treating acute pain. Often, they’re not the best option.”

During National Recovery Month and throughout the year, United Concordia, in partnership with CDEWorld, is offering its network dentists a free continuing education course, entitled *Prescribing Opioids in Dentistry*, which discusses issues they should consider before prescribing opiates.

These include a careful diagnosis of a patient’s condition and a risk assessment that evaluates a patient’s overall health, pain level and factors that might raise concerns.

“In many cases, opiates are not the best option,” said Dufurrena. “Research has shown that non-steroidal inflammatory medications like ibuprofen and acetaminophen can provide equally effective pain relief for dental patients.”

Studies show that dentists write approximately 31 percent of all opioid prescriptions for patients between 10 and 19 years old. An estimated 56 million tablets of 5-mg hydrocodone are prescribed after wisdom teeth extractions each year.

Given the increased risk of physical dependence or overdose, dentists need to think carefully about other options before prescribing opiates to treat acute pain.

“Managing pain is a significant part of providing quality care to your patients,” Dufurrena said. “For dentists, it is equally important to manage pain safely, while reducing the possible adverse effects of opioid use. We will continue to provide support to help them navigate these decisions.”

Recovery Month is a national observance held each September to highlight the achievements of individuals who have reclaimed their lives in long-term recovery. It honors the work of treatment and recovery service providers and encourages citizens to take action to help expand and improve the availability of effective prevention, treatment and recovery services for those in need.

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