Physician Training and Qualification to Educate Patients on Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Stimulant Diversion and Misuse

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Abstract

OBJECTIVES:
The increased number of adolescents diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in recent years has raised concerns regarding diversion and misuse of prescription stimulant medications. As prescribers of these medications, physicians must be prepared to educate patients on these issues. This is the first study to evaluate physician training and qualification to educate adolescent patients on stimulant diversion and misuse.

METHODS:
A questionnaire was developed and mailed to a national sample of child and adolescent psychiatrists (CAPs), child neurologists (CNs), and developmental-behavioral pediatricians (DBPs) in the United States. In addition to descriptive statistics, multivariable regressions (log-binomial and ordinal logistic) were performed to identify differences between subspecialists.

RESULTS:
The final sample consisted of 826 physicians who currently prescribe stimulants. Only 48% of physicians reported receiving formal training on prescription drug diversion (PDD) in medical school, residency, and/or fellowship. Twenty five percent and 48% of physicians felt inadequately qualified to educate patients on the health and legal consequences, respectively, of stimulant misuse and diversion. CAPs were more likely to have received formal training and felt better qualified to educate patients than CNs and DBPs. Physicians who received formal training were 2.4 times more likely to feel adequately qualified to educate patients on these issues. Only 58% of physicians correctly answered a legal question relating to stimulant diversion.

CONCLUSIONS:
Most physicians have not received formal training on PDD and many feel inadequately qualified to educate patients on the health and legal consequences of stimulant misuse and diversion. Increased training is needed so physicians can effectively educate patients with ADHD.