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Development of a Sustainable Curriculum on Substance Use Disorders (SUD) for Emergency Medicine Residents at Cooper University Hospital

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Background: Substance use disorders (SUD) are estimated to afflict nearly 1 in 5 emergency department patients, while the incidence of overdose, particularly opiate-related, continues to rise. Emergency medicine (EM) physicians are on the front line of this epidemic. To the best of our knowledge, through literature searches and discussion with national SUD leaders, our development of a curriculum for EM residents relating to the comprehensive management of SUD in the emergency department is a first. In doing so, we align with the CDC and NIDA goals of reducing exposure to opioids, expanding access to medication-assisted treatment, promoting the use of prescription drug monitoring programs, and expanding the availability of antidote.

Educational Objectives: Our curriculum aims to develop competency among EM residents in each of the following areas as related to SUD: patient care, medical knowledge, practice-based learning and improvement, systems-based practice, and professionalism.

Curricular Design: The curriculum was designed through the help of two medical toxicologists with addiction medicine training, social workers with invaluable insight into community SUD resources, and input from ED program leadership. It will be a requirement for all EM residents to complete the curriculum prior to graduation. At its core, our curriculum consists of formal didactic lectures during structured EM resident weekly conferences, clinical exposure in multiple settings including the ED, outreach clinic, and inpatient detoxification consultation, and synthesis of all material through personalized care plans for SUD emergency department super-utilizers. Lectures are generated from evidence-based literature relating to a variety of SUD topics; addiction medicine specialists are in attendance for lectures and available to further discussion. Table 1 summarizes the curriculum and didactic topics, while Table 2 summarizes a checklist of clinical exposures and tasks required for residents to successfully complete the SUD curriculum.

Impact/Effectiveness: Emergency medicine residents at Cooper University Hospital must complete our designed SUD curriculum to graduate. While the direct effectiveness of this education will be difficult to measure, we are confident Cooper residents will emerge well-equipped to tackle the challenges of the current SUD epidemic in their future practice. Furthermore, we are excited that this curriculum is continuing to foster and spark resident projects related to SUD (examples include local pharmacy pledge to make naloxone readily available, EMS SUD curriculum development, opiate pledge for Cooper University Hospital ED providers).