Chronic pain and the opioid epidemic is a growing issue for health centers, both nationwide and here in Texas. Over the last couple of years, TACHC has been promoting an integrative approach to chronic pain, which is now considered the gold-standard. Many health centers are interested in finding alternatives to opioids, especially since the data suggests that we should be doing so, although the challenge often is figuring out how to pay for these services which may not be considered billable in an FQHC environment (e.g. acupuncture, massage therapy, etc.). As a result, TACHC has been advocating for a multidisciplinary team-based approach with integrated behavioral health, mind-body therapies such as mindfulness and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, group medical visits, as well as connecting health centers to Project ECHO so providers can feel more comfortable managing pain patients. Additionally, TACHC has recently completed template Policies and Procedures around the safe prescribing of opioids for chronic pain, which are now available in the TACHC Manual.

Part 1 of this CPI webcast series will feature an overview of chronic pain and the opioid epidemic, including best practices of how to address it integratively with non-pharmacologic and pharmacologic treatments. This presentation will review the data around pain management options including the numerous integrative approaches that have good efficacy and safety profiles, examine the links of chronic pain to addiction and substance abuse, discuss innovative and practical programs that allow health center providers to more easily take care of these patients in their own practices.

Part 2 will review the new template P&Ps, as well as the “homework” to see what suggestions from Part 1 health centers have been able to implement.

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