

**“Treating Between the Lines”**  
**Understanding Rx & Illicit Drug Abuse**

Ontario Dental Association Annual Spring Meeting

April 19, 2024

**Learning Outcomes**

At the end of the presentation, the dental professional will be able to:

Detect patients with substance abuse disorders using the physical, oral, and behavioral clues of the 3 most commonly abused drugs; depressants, stimulants, and opioids.

Discuss substance abuse with patients and communicate effectively your professional responsibilities and ethical boundaries in treating patients with substance use disorders.

Select appropriate pain-management strategies

## Step 1: Detection

- **Depressants-** Benzodiazepines (Valium, Elavil, Xanax, Klonopin, Ativan), barbiturates (Phenobarbital, Mebaral), sleep aids (Soma, Sonata, Lunesta), alcohol which cause euphoria, calmness, and relaxation.
  - Physical Clues: Drowsiness, clumsiness, spider angiomas, dilated pupils, irritability, amnesia
  - Oral Clues: Dry mouth, lingual erosion, oral cancer, periodontal disease



- **Stimulants-** Adderall, Ritalin, Focalin, Concerta, methamphetamine, cocaine, crack, ecstasy which cause euphoria, energy, attention, focus and hypersexuality.
  - Physical Clues: Insomnia, mood changes, dilated pupils, elevated blood pressure, extreme weight loss, skin pops
  - Oral Clues: Dry mouth, “meth mouth” (blackened, broken, rotted teeth), extremely poor oral hygiene, attrition



- **Opioids-** Vicodin, Oxycodone, Methadone, Fentanyl, heroin which cause euphoria, analgesia, anti-anxiety, state of well-being.

### **Step 1: Detection (continued)**

- Physical Clues: Lethargy, constricted pupils, track marks, weight loss, pain intolerance, hypothermia
- Oral Clues: Dry mouth, cuspal caries, poor oral hygiene, attrition



### **Step 2: Discussion**

- Use open-ended questions
- Educate your patients about the risks associated with Rx and illicit drug misuse, dependency, addiction
- Be objective
- Speak about your core professional values of building relationships, improving oral health outcomes, and helping your patients.

### **Step 3: Selection of Pain Management Strategies**

- Assess patients who may be at-risk or with a substance-use disorder
- Develop an individualized pain management plan based upon the patient's medical history, risk assessment, and level of pre-operative pain and anticipated post-operative pain
- Use non-opioid analgesics (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory with or without acetaminophen) as first-line approach to managing acute dental pain
- Use of opioid analgesics should follow principle of “lowest dose, shortest duration”

## Resources

- Canadian Pain Task Force Report (2021)  
[Canadian Pain Task Force Report: March 2021 - Canada.ca](#)
- Connex Ontario - Connects all people in Ontario to mental health and addiction support where, when, and how they need it  
Connex Ontario  
**Call: 1-866-531-2600**  
**Text: 'CONNEX' to 247247**  
**Search: <https://www.connexontario.ca/en-ca/>**
- Canadian Centre for Addictions - Contact professional resources who assist dental team members struggling with alcoholism, substance abuse, stress, anxiety, depression, and other emotional disorders  
Canadian Centre for Addictions  
**Call: 1-855-499-9446**
- Drug Enforcement Agency - Drug Information Sheets for parents, educators, and care providers  
<https://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov/publication/drug-fact-sheets>
- Sample Consent Form (from Vermont...a great resource)  
[http://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/ADAP\\_EXAMPLE%20Acute%20Opioid%20Rx%20Informed%20Consent.pdf](http://www.healthvermont.gov/sites/default/files/documents/pdf/ADAP_EXAMPLE%20Acute%20Opioid%20Rx%20Informed%20Consent.pdf)
- Narcotics Monitoring System: Ontario's Prescription Monitoring System  
<https://www.ontario.ca/page/narcotics-monitoring-system>
- Rule Governing Safe Disposal of Unused Drugs  
<https://pharmacy.ky.gov/Documents/Pharmaceutical%20Controlled%20Substance%20Disposal%20General%20Public%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

## Resources (continued)

- Brown R., Chan WY & Whyte F. (2023) C.E. Credit. **Harm Reduction: A Strategy to Improve Outcomes for Dental Patients with Substance-Use Disorders**, Journal of the California Dental Association, 51:1, DOI: [10.1080/19424396.2023.2242570](https://doi.org/10.1080/19424396.2023.2242570)
- Brown RE, Morisky D, Silverstein SJ. **Meth Mouth Severity in Response to Drug-use Patterns and Dental Access in Methamphetamine Users**, Journal of the California Dental Association, 41:6, 421-428, DOI: [10.1080/19424396.2013.12222319](https://doi.org/10.1080/19424396.2013.12222319)
- **A State of Decay, Your Dental Guide to Understanding and Treating “Meth Mouth,”** by Ronni Brown, DDS, MPH. Available at: [www.DrRonniBrown.com](http://www.DrRonniBrown.com)
- **Meth Mouth Treatment Plan Assessment Form**© by Ronni Brown, DDS, MPH, FADI to guide clinical decision making in patients with the oral effects of methamphetamine use. Available at [www.DrRonniBrown.com](http://www.DrRonniBrown.com)
- **Patient Brochures on the Oral Effects of Methamphetamine**© by Ronni Brown, DDS, MPH, FADI Patient Brochures to educate patients about the oral impacts of methamphetamine misuse. Available at [www.DrRonniBrown.com](http://www.DrRonniBrown.com) and [www.PreventMethMouth.com](http://www.PreventMethMouth.com)
- **Ending the Silence: Can We DeW Better**, by Ronni Brown, DDS, MPH. DeW Life Magazine 2020. [DeW Life Autumn 2020 by DewLife Magazine - Issuu](#)

## Resources (continued)

- **How to use fluoride varnish in patients with “meth mouth.”** by Ronni Brown, DDS, MPH. Dental Products Report 51(9), 2017. [How to use fluoride varnish in patients with ‘meth mouth’ \(dentalproductsreport.com\)](http://dentalproductsreport.com)
- Sheff, D. **Beautiful Boy: A Father's Journey Through His Son's Addiction.** Beautiful Boy chronicles the heartbreaking and inspiring experience of survival, relapse, and recovery in a family coping with addiction over many years.
- **“Warning this Drug May Kill You,”** HBO Original Movie. An unflinching look at the devastating effects of addiction on four families that all began with legitimate prescriptions to dangerous painkillers. [www.hbo.com/documentaries/warning-this-drug-may-kill-you.com](http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/warning-this-drug-may-kill-you.com)
- **“Take Your Pill,”** Netflix Original Movie. In a hypercompetitive world, drugs like Adderall offer students, athletes, coders, and others a way to do more, faster and better. But at what cost? <https://www.netflix.com/title/80117831>