

July 22, 2016

License suspension for Seattle Pain Centers could trigger surge of local patients seeking care

Actions Requested

- **Be aware that healthcare providers and pharmacists may see an increased demand for care, questions, and prescription renewals following the suspension of the license for the Medical Director of the Seattle Pain Centers.** Patients previously being seen at the Poulsbo location or those seen at other locations but living in our region who are experiencing withdrawals, looking for new healthcare providers to continue treatment with, and/or seeking answers to their questions may start making visits or calls to local clinics, emergency departments, and/or pharmacies.
- **Utilize the opioid treatment resources provided by Washington State Department of Health as needed** (*see attached*). These include chronic opioid therapy consultation services, guidelines on prescribing opioids, and other support services you may need for encounters with affected patients.

For questions, please contact our Communicable Disease staff at 360-337-5235.

Background

The Washington State Medical Commission's suspended the license of the Medical Director of the Seattle Pain Centers as of Friday, July 15, 2016. This action impacts Seattle Pain Centers' eight clinics across Washington, including a clinic branch located in Poulsbo. Of the potentially 25,000 patients under care at the Seattle Pain Center clinics, it is not clear how many were being seen in the Poulsbo clinic or are from Kitsap County. Thus we do not have an estimate on how many patients in the region will be seeking a new location for care. However, the Poulsbo branch has informed us that they are referring patients to their primary care providers. Patients may pick up their medical records or have them faxed. Medicaid clients that were patients of the Seattle Pain Clinic living in Kitsap, Jefferson or Clallam Counties can request substance use disorder treatment services from the Salish Behavioral Health Organization (SBHO). A list of authorized SBHO Substance Use Disorder Providers is available on their Authorized Providers website (*see resources*).

The Washington State Department of Health (DOH) is working with the Medical Commission and other agencies to minimize gaps in care for the affected patients. In this light, all healthcare practitioners are being encouraged to accept Seattle Pain Center patients under their care as needed. DOH is also reminding pharmacists to honor certain prescriptions from these clinics, and has provided instructions on how to verify the validity of prescriptions in question from these clinics (*see attached*).

Patients are being informed by WA DOH to contact their primary care providers and insurance carriers to determine a plan for ongoing treatment. They are also being advised about the potential symptoms of withdrawal from either daily high dose opioid treatments or long-term benzodiazepine (Xanax, Valium, Ativan, etc.) treatment. Patients are being encouraged to discuss their care, symptoms of withdrawal, and potentially dosage reduction before they run out of medication. If they are in urgent need of a refill, DOH has encouraged patients to visit an urgent care or emergency room, thus these facilities may see an increase in utilization. Similarly, pharmacies may see increased utilization and/or questions regarding unfilled prescriptions.

Resources

Attachments: (1) DOH / WA Medical Quality Assurance Committee Healthcare Practitioner Alert: Medical Commission Suspends License of Seattle Pain Centers Medical Director

Resources: (1) DOH news release: www.doh.wa.gov/Newsroom/2016NewsReleases/16087LiFrankDSuspensionNR
(2) CDC Guidelines on Opioids for Chronic Pain: www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/prescribing/providers.html
(3) SBHO and Authorized Provider list: www.kitsapgov.com/hs/prsn/prsnproviders.htm and [www.kitsapgov.com/hs/prsn/documents/COMMUNITY SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER PROVIDER S.pdf](http://www.kitsapgov.com/hs/prsn/documents/COMMUNITY_SUBSTANCE_USE_DISORDER_PROVIDER_S.pdf)

Healthcare Practitioner Alert: Medical Commission Suspends License of Seattle Pain Centers Medical Director

Overview

- The Washington State Medical Commission is taking action against Frank Li, MD for substandard care.
- This action impacts Seattle Pain Centers' eight clinics across Washington (Everett, Seattle, Renton, Tacoma, Poulsbo, Olympia, Vancouver, and Spokane) and potentially 25,000 patients.
- The Medical Commission is working with the Department of Health, the Health Care Authority, Office of the Insurance Commissioner and the represented professional associations and regulators to coordinate resources and minimize gaps in care for affected patients.

For Practitioners (MDs, DOs, PAs, ARNPs)

The Medical Commission has a website (<http://goo.gl/TEu1fg>) of resources dedicated to pain management and opioid use. **We encourage all practitioners to accept Seattle Pain Center patients under their care.** We are providing a list of resources on chronic opioid therapy for practitioners that may encounter affected patients.

- TelePain (<http://goo.gl/59NOMI>) provides consultation in the management of chronic pain problems.
- The University of Washington launched a psychiatry and addiction case conference series in July. For more information visit <https://goo.gl/uzsemd> or email UWpacc@uw.edu. CME is available.
- Consultation options are available at UW Pain Medicine (<http://goo.gl/EHDrML>).
- The Agency Medical Directors' Group guideline (<http://goo.gl/u6IewG>) and the CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids (<http://goo.gl/SiLbUK>) provide recommendations for chronic opioid cases.
- The Washington Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) is a tool providers should use to monitor the total quantity of all controlled substances, including opioids, dispensed to a patient (<http://goo.gl/RljAZE>).

For Pharmacists

- For the safety of the patients, **please continue to honor prescriptions from these clinics.** Prescriptions from Dr. Li are valid if dated prior to July 15, 2016.
- If you question the validity of a prescription from these clinics, please contact the insurance plan or Pharmacy Commission (<http://goo.gl/xAFy0h>) for clarification before rejecting the prescription.

For Hospitals and Emergency Rooms

- Be prepared for an increase in patients who may be experiencing withdrawal from opioids, benzodiazepines or other controlled substances.
- Pain Medication Safety Guidelines in the Emergency Department are available at (<http://goo.gl/4WmS5A>).