

2022 Opioid Clinical Practice Guidelines – Are You Ready?

In the first update since 2016, the CDC has implemented new [2022 guidelines for clinical opioid use](#). Important changes have occurred, and Digital 360 Health is ready to support providers as they learn and implement these provisions into current practice while educating staff and patients.

CDC clinical practice guidelines are intended to be *flexible* to support individualized clinical decision-making and patient-centered care. However, they are also intended to improve communications between providers and patients about the risks and benefits of opioid therapy for pain, as well as improve the safety, function, and quality of life for patients coping with pain.

[Twelve new recommendations](#) from the CDC fall into four broad practice categories - each of which addresses a phase in the continuum of care for patients taking opiates. These practice guidelines are intended for adults with either acute, subacute, or chronic pain.

2022 Opioid Recommendation Clinical Practice Categories:

- Deciding to administer opioids for pain
- Opioid selections and dosages
- Duration of opioid treatment and conducting follow-up
- Assessing risk and addressing potential harms

The 2022 recommendations do *not* apply to pain related to sickle cell disease, cancer, patients in the ED or hospital, or to patients receiving palliative or end-of-life care.

Clinical Practice Guidelines Improve Outcomes

Integrating clinical practice guidelines into daily treatment routines and workflows is key to maintaining consistent, high-quality patient care and reducing malpractice exposure. The Digital 360 Health software platform is designed *by physicians*, to support patient-centered practice.

By linking patients with their providers for remote monitoring and patient-reported data, providers are able to:

- Provide more comprehensive care
- Increase revenue
- Monitor effectiveness of treatment plans
- Improve office efficiency
- Increase patient engagement and health knowledge level

This innovative software platform is *ideal* for pain practices that need to closely monitor opioid therapy.

Let's take a look at some of the new 2022 practice guidelines and how the Digital 360 Health features help busy providers intuitively meet the requirements.

1. **Set functional goals.** CDC Recommendation Five states that clinicians seeing new patients that are already using opioids should establish treatment goals, including functional goals. Clearly documenting a treatment plan, including specific goals before prescribing, clarifies expectations up front and sets the tone for improved patient safety, health, and well-being.

The Digital 360 Health software platform not only records functional goals but enhances communication between provider and patient to monitor progress towards those goals.

2. **Provide curated educational materials regarding opioids.** Clinicians have a responsibility to monitor patients who are unable to taper off of opioids and continue to require high-dose or otherwise high-risk regimens, such as in combination with benzodiazepines. Part of mitigating overdose risk is providing the individual and family or caregivers the information they need about opioid risks and the safekeeping of opioid medications.

Digital 360 Health's resource center feature allows providers to select and upload the most appropriate media materials to assist in their opioid education efforts.

3. **Remotely monitor patient mental health and comorbidities with custom monitoring schedules.** Many patients are prescribed opioids but are unable to access ongoing care, whether due to disability or location. This situation poses risks for abrupt opioid discontinuation, lack of access to life-saving interventions, and management of mental health and substance use comorbidities.

Patients simply need access to the app on a smartphone or the browser on their tablet or computer to communicate pain levels, medication side effects, behavioral status, and complications.

4. **Remotely monitor the patient during tapering and after dosage changes.** The Digital 360 Health software platform can be used to automatically monitor medications, including opioids, for efficacy, complications, and side effects when an order is placed in the EMR. The platform sets customizable alerts for the provider when certain conditions occur. Monitoring medications closely minimizes the risk of long-term opioid abuse and overdose by tapering and discontinuing opioids among patients who do not receive a clear benefit from opioid meds.

By automating this step and integrating Digital 360 Health with your EMR, provider workflow is streamlined.

5. **Monitor higher-risk patients more frequently.** The CDC recommends increased monitoring for those with renal or hepatic insufficiency, and patients over age 65. Common risks associated with these patient populations – like constipation, falls, and cognitive impairment – can be prevented by diligent monitoring solutions.

Set up the Digital 360 Health platform to specifically monitor bowel regimens, exercise, and cognition, as well as other side effects associated with renal or hepatic insufficiency.

- 6. Reassess opioid-naïve patients within 1 month of initiating treatment and frequently over the first three months.** Evidence suggests that at some point within the first three months of treatment, the risks for opioid use disorder increase. Early assessment and intervention provide the opportunity to modify the treatment plan in accordance with functional goals and reduce the risk of long-term opioid use.

Use Digital 360 Health to automatically monitor patients during the first three months, at a customizable frequency, after starting an opioid prescription.

- 7. Assess for sleep apnea.** Sleep apnea is associated with increased risk for life-threatening respiratory or nervous system depression or overdose. The CDC recommends cautious dose titration and careful monitoring of patients with mild sleep-disordered breathing. Also, whenever possible, providers should avoid prescribing opioids to patients with moderate or severe sleep-disordered breathing.

Use the Digital 360 Health platform to assess individuals for sleep apnea risk using the Epworth and STOP sleep apnea scoring surveys. This information can guide treatment decisions and prompt referral and further testing.

- 8. Screen for depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation.** Patients with anxiety disorders, depression, and other mental health conditions are more likely to be prescribed benzodiazepines, which can exacerbate respiratory depression when taken with an opioid. This poses an increased risk for overdose. By consulting with behavioral health specialists when needed, providers can better manage comorbid conditions and pain.

Use the Digital 360 Health platform to monitor for depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation – helping to identify these psychological conditions early for appropriate intervention.

- 9. Monitor, track, and actively guard against health disparities related to pain management and treatment.** Health inequities, whether related to culturally appropriate care, health literacy, stereotyping, or reduced access to care should be considered and guarded against in every treatment scenario.

Use the Digital 360 Health platform to run comparative analytics among patient populations, segmenting data based on zip code.

Ready for more information about Digital 360 Health and a demo? [Contact us](#) and get started today! We would love to share our excitement about the innovative features we have available to enhance your practice and communication with patients.