

# Vermont Dentists' Opinions and Attitudes Regarding the 2017 Opioid Prescribing Rules

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## Objective

To determine the opinions and attitudes of Vermont dentists and oral surgeons regarding the 2017 Rule Governing the Prescribing of Opioids for Pain in order to inform strategies to best support these health professionals in their care of patients experiencing pain.

## Background

- In 2017, 11.4 million people misused prescription opioids and 17,087 deaths were attributed to opioid overdose.
- From 2010 to 2015, opioid prescribing rates among dental patients with private insurance increased from 130 to 147 per 1,000 patients.
- In 2015, nearly 15,000 adolescents and young adults received opioid prescriptions from dentists:
  - 6.9% received at least one more prescription three months to one year later
  - 5.8% were diagnosed with opioid abuse within a year of the first prescription.
- Vermont policy makers have responded to the opioid crisis including rules that:
  - Recommend quantity and duration limits for opioid prescriptions
  - Require continuing education focused on opioid prescribing
  - Require prescribers to query the Vermont Prescription Monitoring System (VPMS)
- The American Dental Association hosted educational session and published a best-practice prescribing toolkit.

## Methods

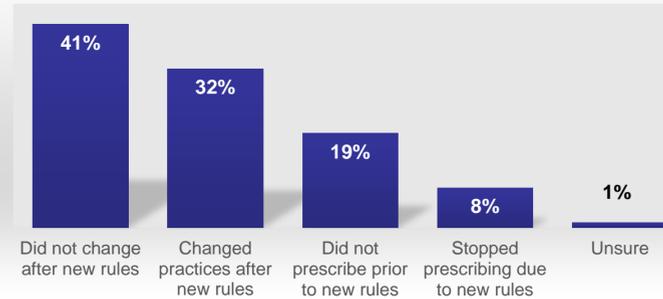
- Electronic survey was deployed to Vermont dentists from December 2018-January 2019.
- The survey included multiple choice and qualitative (open-ended) questions.

## 123 Survey Respondents

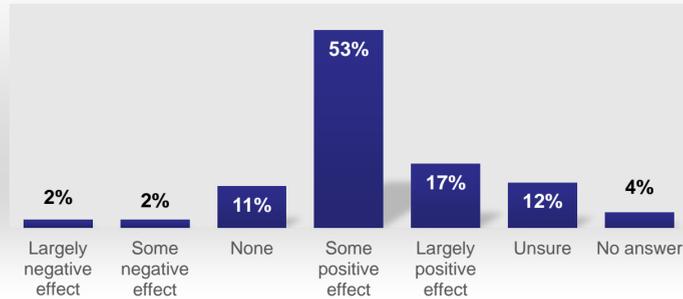
- Dentists from 13 of VT's 14 Counties (exception: Grand Isle)
- 85% general dentistry
- 5% oral surgery
- 10% other dental specialties
- 62% of respondents (n=77) had prescribed an opioid in the past year

## Results

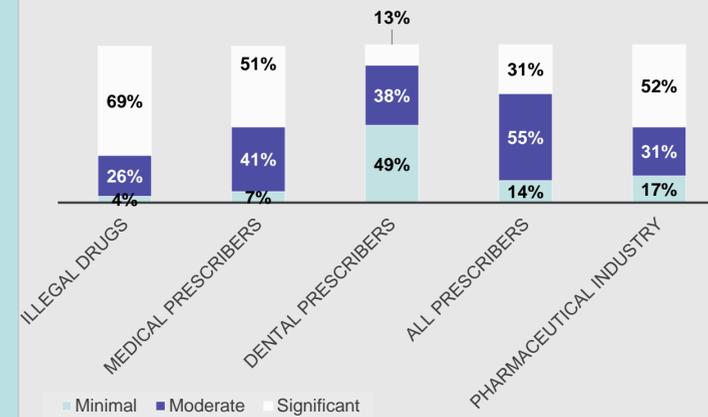
Change in Opioid Prescribing due to July 1, 2017 Opioid Prescribing Rules



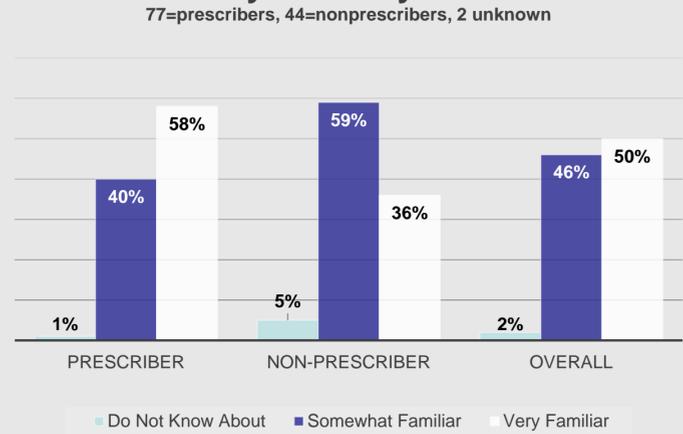
What kind of effect do you believe the new rules will have on the opioid crisis?



Contributors to the Opioid Crisis



Familiarity with July 2017 Rules



### Positive effects of new rules

#### Improved patient education

"In general, patients have an awareness of the risks associated with opioid prescriptions and no longer request them."

#### Changed prescribing habits

"I have found that a written post-operative pain management protocol that explains the safe use of acetaminophen and ibuprofen after surgery has resulted in a successful treatment of post op pain with low to no complaints from the patient"

### Negative effects of new rules

#### Increased time and effort of providers

"The guidelines for prescribing are reasonable, but the redundant education, informed consent, and record keeping demands are just plain overkill."

#### Compromised patient care

"An emergency patient had logistical problems that would have benefited by a simple call-in of 6 pills on a Sunday afternoon."

## Discussion

- A significant minority of dentists changed their prescribing practices due to the 2017 rules.
- Improvement identified include decreasing drug seeking behavior and increased awareness of the risks of opioids.
- The survey data suggest that dentists have been successful in managing patients' pain without opioids and complying with opioid prescribing limits.
- Resentment at being required to comply with regulations was a strong sentiment in many of the comments.

## Recommendations

- Provide a diversity of continuing education opportunities, such as conference-based, in practice-based, tele-education/online, and telephone support.
- Increase access to technical assistance, process/quality improvement for dental practices.
- Develop comprehensive reports of opioid prescribing by Vermont dentists and oral surgeons to understand variability across the dental specialties.
- Leverage opportunities for public and private partners to better engage the dental community in policy making.
- Ensure a comprehensive communication plan for the updated Rule Governing the Prescribing of Opioids for Pain effective March 1, 2019.
- Develop and disseminate a "one-pager" summary of the March 1, 2019 Rules.
- Re-survey one year to measure change in knowledge, attitudes, and perspectives.

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#### Funding

This project was funded by the Vermont Department of Health's Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF-Rx) grant (VDH 03420-A181315, UVM A.33338, P.034909) from the federal Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (CFDA # 93.243).

#### Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Vermont dentists who participated in our survey and informed this report and its recommendations.