Unused Opioids After Joint Replacement Surgeries: 72,146 Untaken Pills at Large in our Community

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Introduction
- In 2016, there were 42,000 opioid related overdose deaths, 16,800 of which were from a prescription opioid
- Currently, more than 11 million people are misusing prescription opioids and at least 2.1 million have an opioid use disorder
- This study set out to investigate opioid usage in the Orthopedic Surgery department of LVHN

Methods
- 51 patients who underwent orthopedic surgeries were identified, and data was collected on the patients demographics, type of surgery, and number of opioids they received
- Transition of Care (TOC) nurses followed up with the patients in at least 3 waves of phone calls at; 1 day post-op, 2-3 weeks post op, and 5-7 weeks post-op
- During these calls, once the patients stated that they were finished taking their medication, data was recorded on how many pills each patient said they took

Results
- Among the 51 patients; 2,659 opioids were prescribed, 1,188 pills were taken, and 1,471 pills were not taken
- For each type of surgery, on average, patients took less than half of their pills
- Extrapolating this study to FY19, 72,146 opioids would be prescribed and not taken, for THA and TKA patients alone

Discussion
- This study showed there to be a concerning amount of pills not taken by patients
- While there have been great strides in reducing the usage of opioid drugs in the Network, there is still room for improvement
- “Weaning Sets”, which will send patients home with a smaller amount of medications, should be utilized more often
- Possible limitations of this study include response bias and the small sample size

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