

BRAVO: The Cardinal Principles of Tapering Patients Off of Chronic Opioid Therapy

BRAVO is an acronym that outlines Dr Anna Lembke's cardinal principles for tapering patients off of chronic opioid therapy. BRAVO stands for *Broaching the Subject, Risk-Benefit Calculator, Addiction Happens, Velocity Matters—and so does Validation and Other Strategies for Coping with Pain.*

Broaching the Subject



- Schedule enough time with your patient to have a discussion on this difficult topic
- Anticipate the patients strong emotional reaction
- Identify the feelings, normalize those feelings and express empathy with the concerns they may have



Risk-Benefit Calculator

- When assessing benefits, weigh a patients' pain relief against their functionality
- Involve family members for more objective views on a patient's opioid use
- Track common risks such as tolerance & opioid-induced hyperalgesia
- Include all of these factors with discussing reasons for tapering off opioids



Addiction Happens

- Addiction is defined by The Three C's: *Compulsive use, Continued use despite consequences, and use that is out of Control*
- Dependence happens when a body relies on a drug to function normally
- Dependence and Addiction are not equivalent



Velocity Matters—and So Does Validation

- Go Slowly, take the necessary time to ease your patients down on their doses
- Let the patient be involved when deciding how much to decrease & at what time
- It is O.K. to take breaks in lowering the dosage
- Never go backwards; your patient's tolerance will increase & progress will be lost



Other Strategies for Coping with Pain

Teach patients these three Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) practices:

- STOP: *Stop, Take a breath, Observe internal & external experiences, & Proceed mindfully*
- Opposite Action Skills: acting opposite to a negative emotional urge in the service of pursuing values or goals
- Radical Acceptance: accepting reality as it is and not as we wish it would be

These materials are part of the Stanford Medicine Center for Continuing Medical Education (CME) Online Activity: *How to Taper Patients Off of Chronic Opioid Therapy*