

WHITE PAPER

# The Power of PDMPs

Advancing Patient Safety Through Better Utilization of Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs



# Advancing Patient Safety Through Better Utilization of Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs



Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs) are widely recognized as a critical tool in addressing the opioid epidemic. Such programs help patients have continuous access to necessary medications for legitimate medical purposes. By providing comprehensive and timely data on controlled substance prescriptions, PDMPs enable clinicians to identify patients who may be at risk for substance use disorder.

This information supports early intervention and helps better inform treatment decisions, ultimately improving patient safety and outcomes. Additionally, PDMPs play a vital role in fostering collaboration among healthcare providers, public health officials and policymakers to develop and implement targeted strategies to combat substance misuse and addiction.

As of 2023<sup>1</sup>, all 50 states have operational PDMPs, as do the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Northern Mariana Islands and Guam. While states have taken great strides to advance PDMPs, there's a growing need for continued innovation as the opioid epidemic evolves. Therefore, states are setting their sights on early intervention and treatment strategies.

## In this white paper, you will learn about:



Changes to Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs



Key benefits of comprehensive PDMP utilization



New strategies to increase the effectiveness of PDMPs

<sup>1</sup>Federation of State Medical Boards - PDMP State by State Overview

# Inside the Expansion of Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs



The expansion of real-time state data sharing and integrated access to PDMPs has resulted in a surge in utilization of this valuable data. Both prescribers and pharmacists regularly view PDMP reports during pivotal moments in a patient's journey, including before they make a prescribing decision and before the prescription is dispensed to the patient at the pharmacy.

As an integral part of the clinical workflow, state PDMPs are uniquely positioned to deliver valuable insights beyond the controlled substance dispensing data traditionally provided.

“State PDMPs were developed to address compliance and oversight of prescribing and dispensing controlled substances,” says Natalie Browning, Senior Vice President of State Account Management at Bamboo Health, a nationwide healthcare software company. “However, over time, states have invested in electronic health record (EHR) integration and cross-state data sharing resulting in more timely access for clinicians and a more comprehensive view of the patient's medical history. Today, states are well positioned to leverage PDMPs' success to further strengthen their impact.”



## PDMP: The Basics

### What is a PDMP?

A prescription drug monitoring program, or PDMP, is an electronic database of controlled substance prescriptions.<sup>2</sup>

### Who uses the data?

Clinicians, pharmacists and other healthcare providers can use PDMP information and data to identify patients who may be at risk of overdose and provide potentially lifesaving information and interventions.

### Why is PDMP data so critical right now?

In the midst of today's opioid epidemic, healthcare providers absolutely must know which patients face risks of substance use disorder or unintentional overdose. PDMP data can be helpful when patient medication history is unavailable, and during care transitions to a new clinician.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/hcp/clinical-guidance/prescription-drug-monitoring-programs.html>

# Inside the Expansion of Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs



A common misconception is that state PDMPs remain isolated, lack interoperability and are underutilized. However, modern PDMPs have undergone significant transformation and are now widely adopted across the United States, driven by advancements in integration and interoperability.

These improvements have enabled seamless access to the PDMP data within clinical workflows, fostering greater utilization by healthcare providers and enhancing their ability to make informed decisions.



## Opioid Epidemic by the Numbers

1. The opioid epidemic cost the United States a record of nearly \$1.5 trillion in 2020, up 37% from previous years.<sup>3</sup>
2. In the last 20 years, 500,000 people in the U.S. have died from opioid overdoses.<sup>4</sup>
3. In 2021, U.S. emergency departments saw at least 4.4 million visits by patients at increased risk for opioid overdose, constituting over 3% of all ED visits.<sup>5</sup>

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**-Natalie Browning**

Senior VP of State  
Account Management  
Bamboo Health

<sup>3</sup><https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/democrats/2022/9/jec-analysis-finds-opioid-epidemic-cost-u-s-nearly-1-5-trillion-in-2020>

<sup>4</sup><https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/2780313>

<sup>5</sup><https://www.naloxoneproject.com/data/national-risk-report>

# Three Key Benefits of Comprehensive PDMP Utilization



## I. Expanded Data Sets

One of the most critical benefits of PDMPs is the ability to support timely interventions during pivotal moments in a patient's healthcare journey. Expanding PDMPs to include data on nonfatal overdoses offers a significant opportunity to enhance their effectiveness in preventing future overdose deaths and improving public health outcomes.

Traditionally, state PDMPs focus on tracking the prescribing and dispensing of controlled substances, helping to identify patterns of misuse or over-prescribing. However, integrating nonfatal overdose data into these systems provides a more comprehensive approach to addressing substance use disorders and overdose risks.

During a recent ten-year period, approximately one fatal overdose occurred for every fifteen non-fatal overdoses, underscoring numerous moments where intervention could make a life-saving difference. Providing this data to clinicians in real time empowers them to make informed decisions that could save lives.

For example, imagine an emergency room doctor treating a patient for a broken bone. Upon reviewing the patient's PDMP data, the physician may find no concerning prescription history. However, they could discover the patient recently experienced a heroin overdose. This critical information may alter the physician's prescribing decision, avoiding the potential exacerbation of a substance use disorder.

Without access to such insights, the patient might otherwise receive an opioid prescription, inadvertently compounding the issue.

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# Three Key Benefits of Comprehensive PDMP Utilization



## 2. Integration of Multi-State PDMP Data

Integrating multi-state PDMP data into EHRs and pharmacy management systems simplifies workflows for prescribers and pharmacists.

“Integrated access eliminates the need for providers to log into separate web portals and manually search for their patients’ prescription histories,” Browning says. “It’s truly a game-changer for clinicians, enabling them to quickly access the critical information they need. This streamlined approach not only enhances care quality but gives clinicians more time to focus on their patients.”

## 3. Proactive Decision Support

Healthcare providers leveraging PDMP data is an essential way to give alerts and recommendations to clinicians about potential risks, such as high dosages, dangerous drug combinations or patterns indicative of substance misuse.

It is important to note that leveraging alerts within clinical workflows is designed to support, not replace, the provider’s decision-making process. These data-driven insights serve as tools to highlight potential risks, such as dangerous drug interactions or patterns of concern, enabling providers to make more informed choices.

However, the ultimate responsibility and authority for patient care decisions remain firmly in the hands of the clinician. By enhancing visibility into relevant data, these tools empower providers to apply their expertise and judgment more effectively, ensuring patient care remains both personalized and evidence-based.



### PDMP by the Numbers<sup>6</sup>

**100% Coverage:** All 50 U.S. states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands operate PDMPs

**1.4 Billion Queries (2023):** Healthcare professionals queried state PDMPs over 1.4 billion times in 2023.

**5.3 Billion Queries (Past 5 Years):** A total of 5.3 billion PDMP queries have been made nationwide in the last five years.

<sup>6</sup>[Prescription Drug Monitoring Program Mandates: Impact On Opioid Prescribing And Related Hospital Use](#)

## New Strategies to Increase the Effectiveness of PDMPs



Unlocking the full potential of PDMPs requires robust collaboration among state governments, the healthcare community and technology experts, combined with a steadfast commitment to safeguarding privacy, ensuring security and fostering user-friendly access that supports informed decision-making.

“States have invested in a valuable ecosystem that delivers critical data to providers at critical points in time,” Browning says.

Efforts to enhance the utility of PDMPs have led to several innovative strategies designed to support more timely and effective interventions. Two notable examples include the introduction of Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) prompts and a naloxone co-prescription prompt.

These advancements help healthcare providers, law enforcement and policymakers better monitor and respond to prescription drug use patterns.

### MOUD Adherence

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Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) Adherence strategies in the PDMP aim to identify and address gaps in care for patients undergoing treatment. These approaches provide actionable insights to healthcare providers by:

- ❖ **Identifying gaps in treatment:** Tools that detect when a patient has experienced a lapse in MOUD dispensation submissions to the PDMP.
- ❖ **Alerting prescribers in real time:** Email alerts are sent to prescribers and their authorized delegates, notifying them of the gap in MOUD, enabling timely follow-up with the patient.
- ❖ **In-dashboard alerts:** Prescribers and their active delegates can view the MOUD adherence data directly on the PDMP Dashboard, integrating this critical information into their workflow. By proactively notifying providers of treatment interruptions, these approaches support continuity of care and reduces the risk of relapses for patients managing opioid use disorder.

## Naloxone Co-Prescription

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States can equip prescribers with vital insights on Naloxone co-prescription to better support patient safety. These insights may include:

- ❖ **Promoting co-prescribing practices:** When a patient meets state criteria, such as a history of overdose or high-dose opioid use, prescribers can be alerted to consider co-prescribing Naloxone, a life-saving medication that can reverse opioid overdoses. This ensures that high-risk patients are identified and supported with appropriate safety measures, potentially reducing fatalities.
- ❖ **Visual cues in patient reports:** Such alerts can be displayed within the PDMP, highlighting instances where Naloxone co-prescribing may be beneficial.

This enhancement ensures that high-risk patients are identified and supported with appropriate safety measures, potentially reducing fatal overdoses.

These innovations demonstrate the evolving role of PDMPs in providing data-driven, actionable insights to clinicians, ultimately supporting better patient outcomes and advancing public health initiatives.





## Unlock the Potential of PDMPs



Innovative strategies to enhance the utility of PDMPs are improving the effectiveness of interventions in addressing prescription drug misuse, enhancing the ability of healthcare providers to make informed decisions and fostering greater collaboration across various stakeholders in the fight against substance use disorders. By incorporating real-time data, analytics, patient engagement and cross-state data sharing, PDMPs are becoming a more powerful tool in reducing the risks associated with prescription drug misuse and ensuring better patient outcomes.



To learn more, visit Bamboo Health at

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