

## **Appendix**

Semi-Structured interview protocols for all stakeholders and medical professionals.

### **Interview Protocol**

Audio-recorded semi-structured interviews were conducted with previously identified stakeholders (see Methods). The potential interviewees were contacted by the first author via phone or email to learn about the research, to seek their willingness to participate and to schedule an interview. The written consent to participate was obtained and documented prior to conducting the interview.

The interviews were conducted at a place and time indicated by the interviewee. The anticipated time for the interviewees was 1-2 hours.

### **Questions - All Stakeholders**

- How do you see the problem of OUD from your professional standpoint? What are your personal stances, and your past experiences? (*where are you coming from/ background*)
  
- Currently, what are the locally recognized and available resources? How can we make them more efficient/ accessible from your perspective? What other solutions/ support could/ should be implemented?
  
- How do people develop OUD? Can you identify any common stories?
  
- What is the most challenging aspect of the problem? What and how could be changed to

make an improvement?

○ I would like to ask you about your perspective on how you perceive the addiction and drug abuse affect a wider community (locally and/or statewide). What are the reactions of families/ relatives/ friends of those who struggle with the addiction? What is the hardest aspect of the problem for them? Do they know what to do and how to react (*emergency care and long-term support eg. using naloxone, mental support*)?

○ Are socio-economic factors important with regard to this problem? To which extent, and how? Do you identify any common factors, which could make some more vulnerable/ prone to become addicted?

*(By socio-economic factors I mean standard information gathered in population studies, as well as information collected during triage and by health-care insurance companies. Those include but are not limited to age, gender, ethnicity, race, education, income. For example, in Maine, men are more likely to overdose than women;).*

○ What is the current state of the replacement treatment such as methadone and suboxone clinics, and their funding? What could you say about their availability and effectivity? Do you think there any roadblock to access such programs? What do you think about treatment accessibility for your patients/ community members?

○ Over the past few years (2011-2014) the number of primary treatment admissions related to synthetic opioids have been steadily decreasing, while those linked to heroine/morphine abuse have been on a rise across all, but one county in Maine. Given this data and your personal experience, what is your perspective related to this shift? What are its sources? What could you

say about abuse of other classes of drugs?

- What do you know about historical approach to programs targeting substance abuse in the US and in the state of Maine (*example “Just say NO”*)? What do you think about them? What types of approaches could be helpful in Maine to address the current opioid epidemic?

### **Additional questions for medical professionals**

- What are the differences between chronic and acute pain from the perspective of medical practice? How are they treated? (*Chronic pain - an ongoing or recurrent pain, lasting beyond the usual course of acute illness or injury or more than 3 to 6 months, and which adversely affects the individual’s well-being. A simpler definition for chronic or persistent pain is pain that continues when it should not. (IASP 2004)*)

- What do you know about mental health problems in the context of OUD?  
What relationship, if any, do you see between OUD and other mental health problems? (*Numerous published studies have been showing a correlation between mental disorders such as depression and/or anxiety and prescription drug abuse. In Maine specifically, 18% of adults with any mental illness qualified as being dependent on substances and/or abusing substances*)

- What type of health care insurance do your patients have? Do you find that HI has an influence over the type of treatment they receive chose?

- Maine has voted in a new legislation, which targets the problem of prescription drug abuse. I would like to ask about your opinion regarding the new policy. What do you know about it? Do you think that the policy enforcement? \*could you identify strengths and limitations of

this policy? *(If needed give a copy for them to recall it)*

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