A Qualitative Evaluation of a Prescription Monitoring Program

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Introduction

- Prescription medication misuse and abuse continues to be a national concern.
- On average, 115 Americans die each day from overdose.[1]
- 58 percent of opioid overdoses in 2016 involved multiple psychotropic drugs.[2]
- National trends are paralleled within the VA.[1]
- PMPs continue to be among the most promising interventions to improve controlled substance prescribing, inform clinical practice, and protect patients at risk.[3]
- PMPs represent a substantially underutilized resource[4] and PMP research is lacking among the veteran population, interdisciplinary mental health providers, and for controlled substances other than opioids.[2,5]

Purpose

Describe the perspectives of VA interdisciplinary mental health care prescribers' views of the PMP in order to provide data for a program evaluation.

Two primary questions were investigated:
1. How does the PMP inform clinical practice?
2. What are the barriers and facilitators of PMP use?

Methods

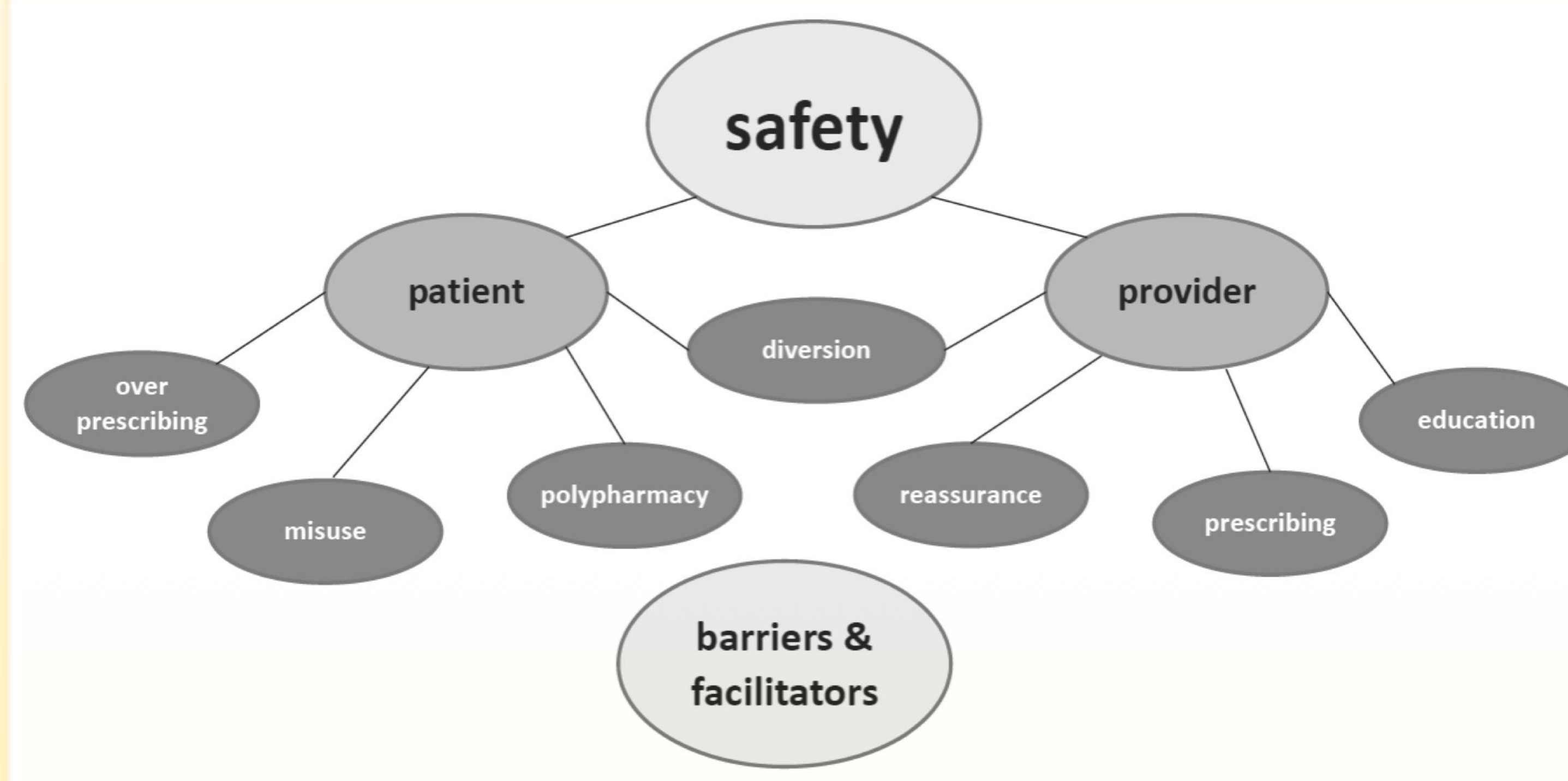This project was deemed not human subjects research.

- The primary tool used to structure the project was the interview guide.
- A convenience sample of 7 VA interdisciplinary (MD, NP, and PA) mental health providers consented for an interview.
- The recorded interviews were de-identified, transcribed verbatim, read and re-read, and verified for accuracy.
- Content was compiled electronically, and preliminary codes followed by themes were developed using the standard thematic analysis process outlined by Braun and Clarke.[7]
- Based on the codes that emerged from the coding process, themes were used to conduct an overall analysis of PMP use.
- Research experts in qualitative thematic analysis provided guidance for both the thematic and program evaluation components.
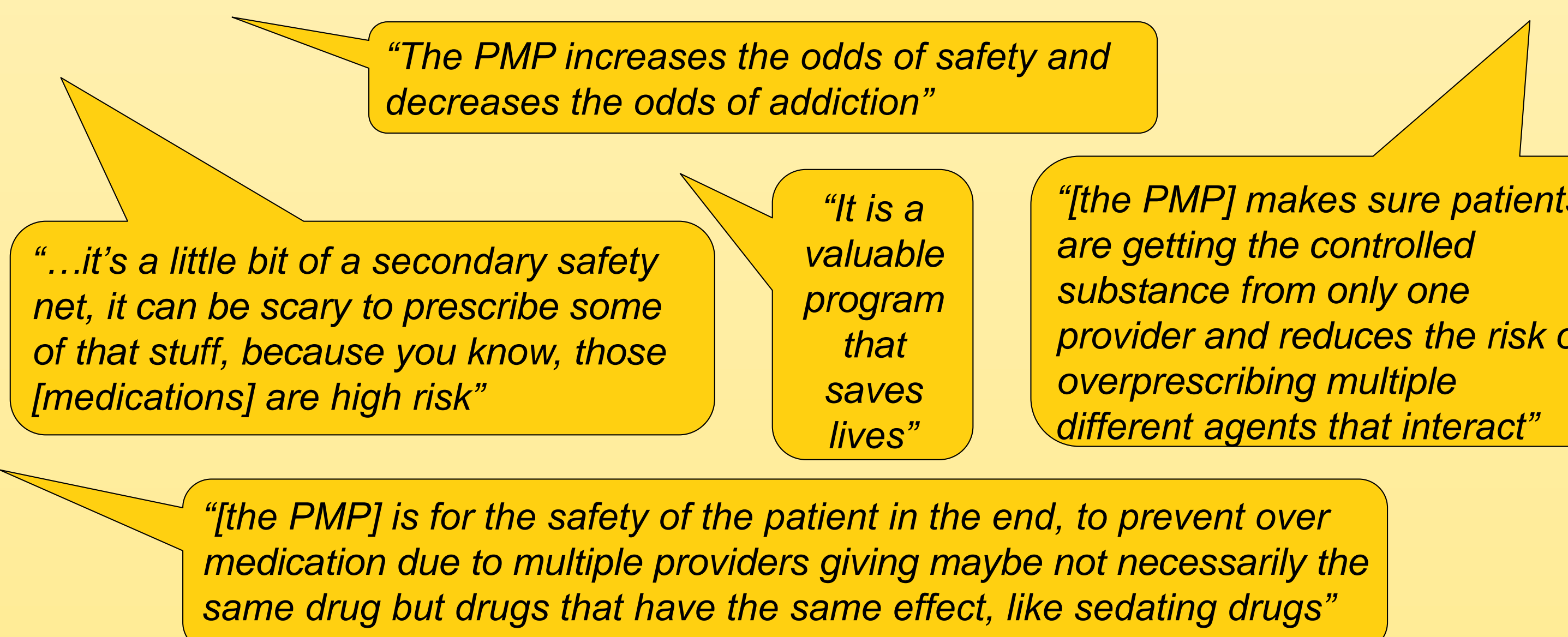
Phases of Thematic Analysis[7]

1. Familiarizing with the data
2. Generating initial codes
3. Searching for themes
4. Reviewing themes
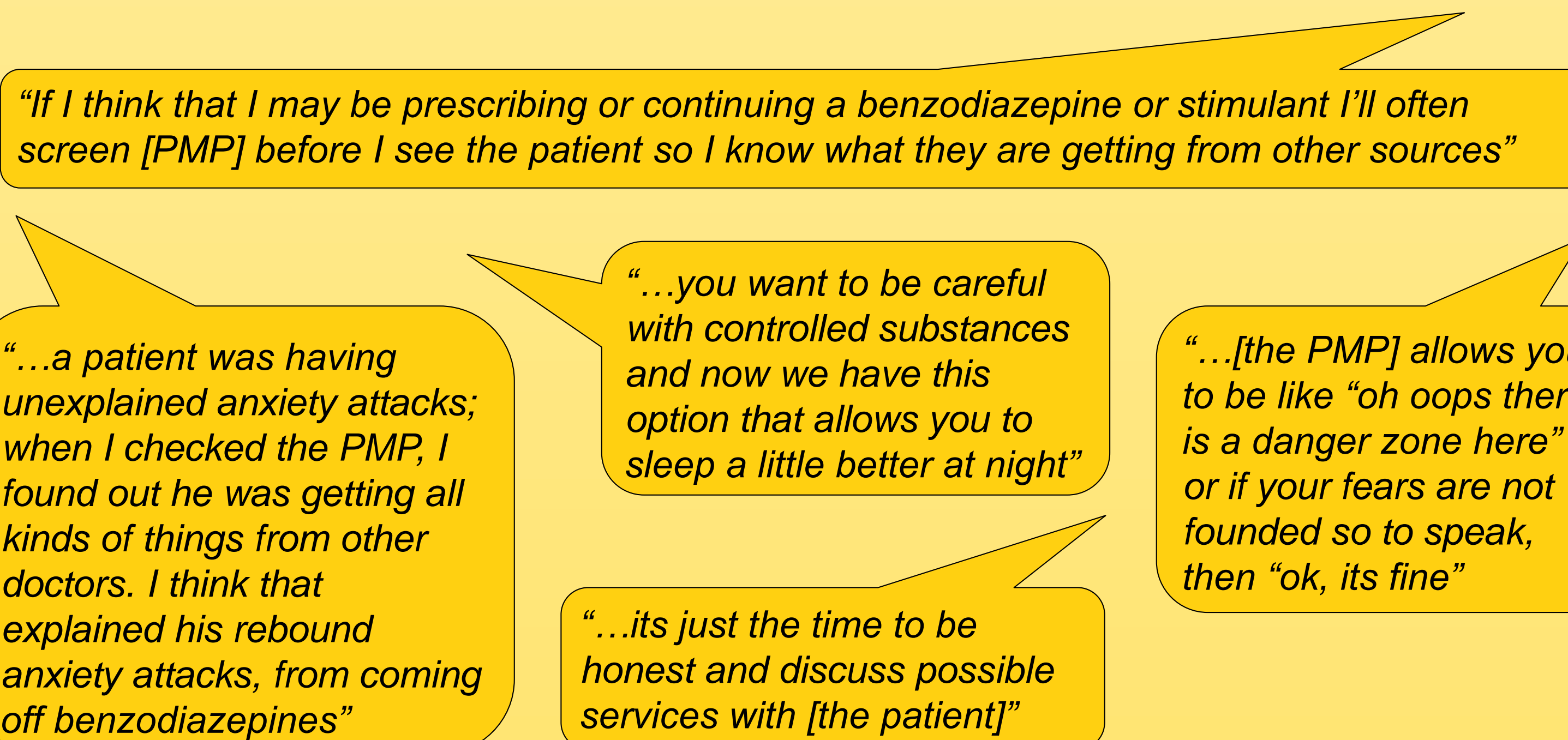5. Defining and naming themes
6. Producing the report

Themes

Valuing the Safety of Patients and Providers

Enhancing patients safety and reducing the risk of controlled substance prescriptions

"The PMP increases the odds of safety and decreases the odds of addiction"

"...it's a little bit of a secondary safety net, it can be scary to prescribe some of that stuff, because you know, those [medications] are high risk"

"It is a valuable program that saves lives"

"[the PMP] makes sure patients are getting the controlled substance from only one provider and reduces the risk of overprescribing multiple different agents that interact"

"[the PMP] is for the safety of the patient in the end, to prevent over medication due to multiple providers giving maybe not necessarily the same drug but drugs that have the same effect, like sedating drugs"

Reassuring providers about their decisions when prescribing controlled substances

"If I think that I may be prescribing or continuing a benzodiazepine or stimulant I'll often screen [PMP] before I see the patient so I know what they are getting from other sources"

"...a patient was having unexplained anxiety attacks; when I checked the PMP, I found out he was getting all kinds of things from other doctors. I think that explained his rebound anxiety attacks, from coming off benzodiazepines"

"...you want to be careful with controlled substances and now we have this option that allows you to sleep a little better at night"

"...its just the time to be honest and discuss possible services with [the patient]"

"...[the PMP] allows you to be like "oh oops there is a danger zone here" or if your fears are not founded so to speak, then "ok, its fine""

Barriers

Time
"It takes some time"

Access
"I think the main barrier to my individual use is remembering my password"
"I have to keep my password at the ready"

Location
"I do worry there are cases somebody might be getting something from three states away"

Facilitators

Understanding
"...if word gets to folks so that they understand [the PMP] better it makes it a little easier [to use]"

Support
"I get help from the PharmD's"
"...our pharmacy team is very much integrated into our care so they will basically look through the PMP before we even blink"

Conclusions

- The data from this project suggests that: 1) providers value the PMP in clinical care: 2) providers are motivated by safe prescribing: 3) providers utilization of the PMP varies.

- The results of this analysis was disseminated to staff, researchers, and policymakers in order to increase PMP understanding and utilization. An abstract for a poster presentation at the APNA national conference was submitted and a manuscript was submitted to JAPNA.

References

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