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## **Introduction**

Hello, I'm (NAME) from Abt Global. I'll be the discussion leader for our group today. Thank you for taking the time to speak with us. (NAME) is also with Abt Global and will be taking notes during the discussion. The focus group will take about 60 minutes.

As a reminder, in 2022 the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, known as the CDC, released the *Clinical Practice Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Pain*. This guideline makes recommendations to improve pain management approaches and emphasizes the need for clinicians to listen and work with patients to provide effective and safe pain management.

General Dynamics Information Technology (GDIT) and Abt Global are conducting a research study for CDC to better understand how this Guideline was implemented. We want to learn from your experiences with pain, and how your care and treatment may have changed because of this Guideline. This study is funded by the CDC.

Let's get started by going over some ground rules for our discussion today:

- We ask that, to the extent possible, individuals speak one at a time so that we do not miss any information. We will make sure everyone has a chance to talk.
- Please be respectful of the opinions of others.
- We are not seeking agreement on anything in today's group.
- Please respect one another's privacy and do not share anything you hear in today's focus group with anyone outside of the focus group.
- Please turn off your cell phone and other devices or put them in vibrate or silent mode, if possible.
- Be sure to ONLY USE FIRST NAMES or no names at all during the discussion. Please do not use your last name. Also, if you bring up another person you know as an example in our discussions, please do not use their name. So, whenever you mention a name, it should only be a first name and never a last name.
- Participation is voluntary and you are not required to answer every question. This will be a discussion, not an interview.
- There are no right or wrong answers.
- You may also choose not to participate or to leave the group, at any time or for any reason, without consequence.
- Feel free to ask me questions at any time.

The information you provide in the focus group will be kept private. Your name will not appear in any internal or published reports from the study. Information learned from these discussions may be presented in documents or materials like reports, conference presentations or posters, or publications. Please know that the information you share will not be linked to your name or any other identifying information. Although we will do our best, there is a small risk of loss of privacy.

You will receive a \$75 virtual gift card to compensate you for the time spent participating in the focus group.

To assist with our notes, we would like to record the focus group, so we do not miss anything. The recording will not be shared with anyone outside Abt Global, GDIT or CDC. We will use this recording to make de-identified transcripts of the recordings, which will be shared with GDIT and CDC. This recording will be deleted once our notes from the focus group have been completed.

**Do any of you have any questions before we get started?**

**When I ask you, please provide a verbal “YES” to indicate that you have agreed to participate in the focus group and that we may record the discussion today.**

## **WARM UP/UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT OF PAIN**

1. Let's start out by introducing yourselves with your first names and talking a bit (just a few minutes) about each of your stories as related to your pain. What treatments and medications for pain have you tried? What has been most effective in managing your pain?

**PROBES:** What was the source of the pain? When did it start, and how long did you experience the pain before seeking treatment? Were you prescribed medications or treatments?

2. There are a lot of strategies to help with pain. Tell us about your experience with physical therapy or exercise therapy to help with your pain.
3. Counseling or behavioral therapy is often used to help with pain. What has your experience been receiving counseling for pain management?
4. Have you had experience with any other non-medication therapies for pain (e.g., acupuncture)? Can you share your experience with those?
5. Medications other than opioids, such as ibuprofen and acetaminophen, which can be both prescribed or over-the-counter, are also often used for pain management. Tell us your experience with these non-opioid medications to manage your pain.
6. Tell us about your first experience being prescribed opioids for pain. How was your pain after you began taking opioids? What side effects did you experience?

**PROBES:** Opioids, such as oxycodone (OxyContin), hydrocodone (Vicodin) or morphine, for pain. What about opioids compared to other treatments (physical therapy, behavioral therapy, acupuncture) and the risks/harms and benefits.

7. When were you initially prescribed opioids for pain? How long were you initially prescribed opioids for?? Had you received additional refills for opioids after that first prescription?

#### CHANGE IN CARE SINCE GUIDELINE IMPLEMENTATION

8. Have you noticed any changes to how clinicians manage your pain since November 2022? If so, what have you noticed?

**PROBES:** As a reminder, in 2022, CDC released the Clinical Practice Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Pain. This guideline makes recommendations to improve pain management approaches and emphasizes the need for clinicians to listen and work with patients to provide effective and safe pain management. Changes in tone or focus of conversations, changes in ability to access other medications or therapies like acupuncture or physical therapy, changes in tapering conversations, changes in other recommendations

9. Give me an example of how the management of your pain has improved since November 2022?
10. Give me an example of how the management of your pain remained the same since November 2022?
11. How has your pain management gotten worse since November 2022?
12. Since November 2022, what other factors may have affected how your pain has been managed, such as a change in primary care clinician or changes in your insurance coverage or changing from a primary care clinician to a pain management specialist?
13. Thank you very much for sharing your experiences with me. Thinking about these experiences, is there anything else you think we should know?