Pill Count Procedure

**Purpose:** To establish guidelines for providers and staff to follow when performing random pill counts for patients prescribed narcotics or other controlled substances.

**Procedure:**

1. Any patient who is prescribed a controlled substance covered by the controlled substance policy will be called at least yearly for a random pill count.

2. The medical assistant/nurse will call the patient as early in the day as possible and advise them that they need to bring all of their controlled substance medications into the office within the same day of the phone call.
   a. The medical assistant/nurse will name all of the medications that must be brought in for the count. The MA/nurse will document in the EMR the names of the medications that are expected to be brought in as well as the date and time that the patient was called.
   b. If the patient expresses difficulty in getting to the office within that time frame, the medical assistant/nurse must advise them that they will no longer be prescribed controlled substances if they fail to appear for the pill count.
      i. The following is a script for the medical assistant to use when discussing the need for a pill count with the patient: “This is ____ (name of MA) and I am calling from _____ (provider’s name) office. We are calling you in today for a pill count of your medications (list them). You must arrive for your pill count by ____ (time). If you fail to arrive for your pill count by ____ (time), then by the terms of your agreement you will no longer be prescribed controlled substances from your provider or any other providers at PCHC.”
      ii. If the patient states that they are unable to appear for their pill count because they are out of town, the patient will be advised that they need to report to the nearest pharmacy by the end of the day to have their medications counted. The pharmacy must fax a document (on letterhead and signed by a pharmacy staff person) which clearly indicates the following:
         1. Med name/strength:
         2. Instructions:
         3. Date filled:
         4. Amount dispensed:
         5. Description of the pill:
         6. Counted:
         7. Date and time counted:
      iii. The medical assistant will notify the patient that if they fail to arrive for their pill count by the end of the day, then by the terms of their agreement they will no
longer be prescribed controlled substances from their provider or any other providers at PCHC.

3. When the patient arrives at the office to have their medications counted, the PSR will place the visit on the MA schedule and check them in.
   a. Once scheduled, the summary on the phone note is changed to “Scheduled-Random pill count”.

4. The PSR will ask the patient (or surrogate) to have a seat in the waiting room until the medical assistant/nurse is ready to perform the procedure.

5. The medical assistant/nurse will place a clean chux or sterile drape on the procedure tray prior to counting the medications, if there is not a pill counter available.
   a. The medical assistant/nurse will wash his/her hands prior to and after counting the medications.

6. The medical assistant/nurse will open an office procedure, pull in the controlled substance form and pull in the pill count form.
   a. Med name/strength:
   b. Instructions:
   c. Pharmacy:
   d. Date filled:
   e. Amount dispensed:
   f. Description of the pill:
   g. Counted:
   h. Expected number of remaining pills:
   i. Provider:
   j. Entry of Pass/Fail

7. The medical assistant/nurse will take the medications to an exam room.

8. The pills will be counted in front of the patient. Once the count has been finished by the MA, she will ask the patient (or surrogate) if they agree with the pills counted and will document this in the chart. (If there is a discrepancy, the MA will ask another clinical person to witness the pill count with them.)
   a. Both clinical staff people will count the pills independently without telling one another how many they have counted.
   b. Once both of the clinical staff people have finished their pill counts independently, they will compare their numbers to ensure that they match.
   c. If the clinical staff persons do not obtain the same number of pills, the count will be repeated.
9. Once the pill count has been performed and the documentation has been completed, the results will be sent to the PCP for review.

10. The provider will determine whether the results of the pill count were appropriate and will prescribe or discontinue the controlled substances accordingly.