# **Chapter 4:** Order Set Maintenance and Care Pathways

## *Introduction/Background: Order Set Maintenance*

> "If an option is designated as the 'default,' it will attract a large market share. Default options thus act as powerful nudges."
>
> --Richard Thaler, Nobel Laureate, Economics

The power of the "default option" is such an influential factor in decision making that Richard Thaler was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics in recognition of his studies of the phenomenon. Every day, in thousands of health systems around the world, doctors are presented with palettes of default options for what to prescribe, who to refer a patient to, and various other decisions. We call these pre-established defaults "Order Sets." And as Richard Thaler's work points out, they play an influential role in the adoption of best practices.

Of all the interventions taken on at organizations with a successful opioid stewardship program, order set maintenance is probably the most common and the most powerful. That is because the options presented on these powerful decision-enabling tools carry the tremendously important responsibility of matching our medical best practices. However, as our understanding of the opioid crisis progressed, our best practices changed rapidly, and often the order set defaults did not keep pace.

During the early phases of a successful opioid stewardship program, the committee should start to establish what the best medical practices should be in various clinical scenarios. One way to go about this is to look at the commonly used order sets and re-evaluate whether they match the way that the medical leaders of those service lines hope to standardize care. This is the beginning step of a thorough order set review process.

> **Key Recommendation:** Technology Leaders in the Opioid Stewardship Committee need to offer order set review as a key subproject of the overall team's mission.