

Improper use of opioids sparks a new Canadian practice guideline

May 3 2010

Increases in opioid prescriptions, leading to increased misuse, serious injuries, and overdose deaths have spurred Canadian colleges of physicians and surgeons to create a new guideline for opioid use with chronic non-cancer pain, states an article in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*.

Opioid use in Canada has increased significantly, with a 50% increase in recorded prescription-opioid consumption between 2000 and 2004. Canada is now the world's third-largest [opioid](#) consumer per capita.

In November 2007, Canadian medical regulators formed the National Opioid Use Guideline Group (NOUGG) and created the Canadian Guideline. Their goal was to help develop and implement a guideline to provide physicians with information to prescribe opioids safely and effectively to patients with chronic non-cancer pain.

"The Canadian Guideline is intended to assist physicians with decisions to initiate appropriate trials of opioid therapy for patients with chronic non-cancer pain, to monitor long-term opioid therapy, and to detect and respond appropriately to situations of opioid misuse including addiction," write Clarence Wepler, Co-chair of the National Opioid Use Guideline Group and coauthors. "It was not designed to serve as a standard of care nor as a training manual."

The Canadian Guideline targets primary-care physicians and medical and surgical specialists who manage patients with chronic non-cancer

pain. Pharmacists, nurses and dentists may also find it useful. The Guideline does not discuss treatment of [chronic pain](#) with non-opioids.

More information: The full guideline documents are available at nationalpaincentre.mcmaster.ca/opioid/

Provided by Canadian Medical Association Journal

Citation: Improper use of opioids sparks a new Canadian practice guideline (2010, May 3)
retrieved 2 February 2024 from
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2010-05-improper-opioids-canadian-guideline.html>

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