

New analysis recommends responsible prescription of opioids to pain patients

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A recent review and analysis suggests that some policies restricting opioid prescriptions to curb overdose deaths could be harming those who need them the most: pain patients.

"Negative outcomes of unbalanced opioid [policy](#) supported by [clinicians](#), [politicians](#), and the media" was published in the latest issue of the *Journal of Pain & Palliative Care Pharmacotherapy*. Co-authored by Willem Scholten and Jack E. Henningfield, the article suggests that the opioid epidemic has at times been misrepresented by politicians and the media.

"There is a disturbing tendency among doctors, politicians and the media in the US to be preoccupied by certain aspects of opioids: their benefits are questioned and their risks sensationalised," said Scholten, a medicine and controlled substances consultant. This, he says, can lead people to lose sight of the bigger picture of pain management.

The article advocates balanced and comprehensive drug control policies that are based on accurate evaluation of the science and epidemiology, rather than what is sometimes portrayed in the mainstream media. The authors provide a number of recommendations for responsible prescription of opioids, such as regular assessment of the patient's pain and functioning and informing the patient and his/her caregivers about the correct use of prescribed medicines, as well as how to safely dispose of unused medicines.

Scholten and Henningfield said while opioid overdoses are on the rise in the United States, this is not the case in places such as Europe. While they encourage the creation of policies minimizing the harm of opioids, they suggest doing so in the right context and in a rational way.

"Blocking access to prescription opioids should not have a negative impact on pain treatment or worsen overall harmful substance use," Scholten said.

More information: Willem Scholten et al. Negative outcomes of unbalanced opioid policy supported by clinicians, politicians, and the media, *Journal of Pain & Palliative Care Pharmacotherapy* (2016). [DOI: 10.3109/15360288.2015.1136368](https://doi.org/10.3109/15360288.2015.1136368)

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