

Ensuring balance in the Medical Use of Opioids

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“The medical use of narcotics continues to be indispensable for the relief of pain and suffering adequate provision must be made to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs for such purposes”
(Preamble, Single Convention of Narcotic Drugs, 1961).

The WHO defines morphine as an essential medicine, now included in the Essential Medicines List for Pain and Palliative care. In order to ensure their medical use, the “principle of balance” is applied, ensuring that these medicines are accessible for medical purposes while working to reduce misuse, abuse and diversion. While opioids are readily available in the United States, there are still many barriers to their accessibility. These barriers can be defined according to 1) laws and policies, 2) medicine availability and 3) clinician education. Many US States have had significant barriers to opioid availability in their laws of policies. Based on efforts based in palliative care and end of life initiatives, State Report Cards in Pain Policy have been constructed over the last 10 years. Most states have shown improvement in these policies. However at the same time, deaths associated with opioid use have increased. While there is no denying the major increase in opioid use in the US, and that there is still a great need for clinician pain education, analysis of this data indicates that most of the deaths are associated with a combination of opioids, sedatives and alcohol and one third (1/3) are associated with Methadone that only represents 3% of pain prescriptions. This data will be reviewed particularly from the perspective of those among the 100 million Americans suffering with pain, including the elderly, who may benefit from these essential medicines.

Pain and Policy Studies Group:

<http://www.painpolicy.wisc.edu>

PainPolicy Blog

<http://painpolicy.wordpress.com>

Single Convention of Narcotic Drugs.

http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Single_Convention_on_Narcotic_Drugs#PREAMBLE

Ensuring Balance in National Policies on Controlled Substances.

http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2011/9789241564175_eng.pdf?ua=1

Federation of State Medical Boards.

Model Policy on the Use of Opioid Analgesics in the Treatment of Chronic Pain July 2013

http://www.painpolicy.wisc.edu/sites/www.painpolicy.wisc.edu/files/FSMB_pain_policy_july2013.pdf

NIH Pain Consortium: Pathways to Prevention Workshop: The Role of Opioids in the Treatment of Chronic Pain: Draft report

https://prevention.nih.gov/docs/programs/p2p/ODPPainPanelStatementDraft_10-02-14.pdf

Institute of Medicine: Relieving Pain in America: A Blueprint for Transforming Prevention, Care, Education, and Research

<http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2011/Relieving-Pain-in-America-A-Blueprint-for-Transforming-Prevention-Care-Education-Research.aspx>

PAINS (Pain Action Alliance to Implement a National Strategy) including policy briefs.

<http://www.painsproject.org>

PAINS Policy Briefs.

#1 Impact of State Policy and Regulations on those living with chronic pain

www.painsproject.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/policy_brief.pdf

#2 Prescription Monitoring Programs

www.painsproject.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/pains_policy_brief_2.pdf

#3 Pain and Policy Studies Group State Report Card 2012

www.painsproject.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/pains_policy_brief_3.pdf

Current State Legislative Barriers

www.painsproject.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/pains_policy_brief_3_insert.pdf

#4 Opioid Treatment Agreements or “Contracts”: Proceed with caution

www.painsproject.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/policy-brief-4-insert.pdf

#5 Never Only Opioids

www.painsproject.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/pain-policy-issue-5.pdf

Center for Disease Control Opioid Safety

<http://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/overdose/index.html>