

OPIOID DEPENDENCE

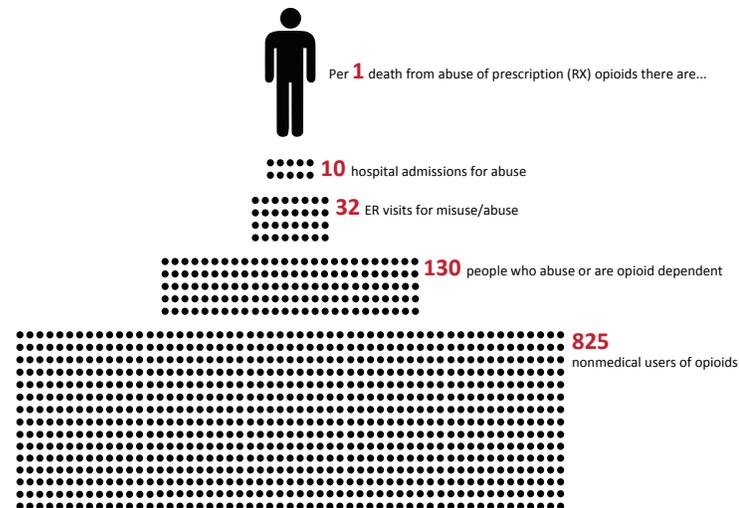
About Opioid Dependence

When used as prescribed, opioid medications, such as oxycodone, morphine and codeine, can safely and effectively manage moderate to severe pain. However, prescription painkillers containing opioids are highly addictive, and regular or long-term use can lead to physical dependence.¹

Opioid dependence is a treatable medical condition and a growing public health issue in the United States affecting nearly 2 million people.^{2,3} The disease is manifested by physical tolerance of opioid medication and withdrawal symptoms, as well as behavioral dependence characterized by the inability to control use, continued use despite negative consequences and social dysfunction.⁴ While many people are able to continue functioning and maintain employment, people with opioid dependence report that it affects all areas of their life and particularly intimate and family relationships.⁵ The resulting costs to patients, family and society are high, including death, sickness, crime, lost productivity and family disruption.²

Opioid dependent patients develop high levels of tolerance and may take increasingly larger doses of their medications to achieve a euphoric effect and reduce withdrawal symptoms.^{4,6} Many abusers begin by taking the opioids orally, but as addiction grows, they demonstrate aberrant behavior, such as crushing the tablets for snorting or injecting.⁷

THE 17,000 ANNUAL DEATHS FROM OPIOID PAIN RELIEVERS ARE ONLY THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG



Sources: <http://cdc.gov/VitalSigns/pdf/2013-07-vitalsigns.pdf>
<http://www.cdc.gov/homeandrecreationalafety/rxbrief>

FAST FACTS

Opioid dependence is more common than the abuse of or dependence on any other type of prescription medication¹⁴

In the U.S. there are approximately 5.1 million Americans currently misusing prescription opioids¹⁵

Deaths from opioid pain relievers exceed those from all other illegal drugs (4.8 vs. 2.8 per 100,000 deaths)¹⁶

The average healthcare cost per patient with opioid dependence is 8 times higher compared to nondependent patients¹⁷

The cost of prescription opioid abuse, dependence and misuse in the U.S. is estimated at \$56 billion per year¹⁸

Symptoms of Withdrawal

Those who become physically dependent on opioids may experience withdrawal symptoms when use of the drug is abruptly reduced or stopped.⁸ Withdrawal symptoms can include:¹

- Restlessness
- Muscle and bone pain
- Insomnia
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Cold flashes
- Involuntary leg movements

Barriers to Care

Although the most effective treatment for opioid dependence is the combination of pharmacological therapy and psychological counseling,⁹ only 40 percent of people with the disease receive treatment.³ The stigma attached to opioid dependence may be one reason for the low number of people who seek treatment. Every year thousands of patients continue to use opioids rather than risk public exposure by receiving treatment.¹⁰ Even among U.S. adults with a family member suffering from the disease of drug or alcohol addiction, half say they have felt a sense of shame.¹¹ In addition to social stigma and misunderstanding of the disease, there is a lack of specialists licensed to treat addiction – among the 800,000 active physicians in the U.S., only about 21,000 have completed special certification to prescribe treatment for opioid dependence,¹² and approximately 4,500 are practicing addiction specialists.¹³

PRESCRIPTION OPIOID DEPENDENCE SOCIETAL COSTS (\$ BILLION)¹⁸



The impact of prescription opioid dependence not only affects outcomes, it costs the U.S. society ~\$56 billion, and imposes a large economic burden on the workplace (\$25.6 billion), criminal justice system (\$5.1 billion) and healthcare (\$25 billion) of which only 5% can be attributed to treatment, prevention and research of opioid dependence (\$1.3 billion).¹⁸

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