

CDC Opioid Guidelines Harming Pain Patients

Survey Finds Steep Decline in Opioid Prescribing

LA CRESCENTA, CA, USA, March 15, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Opioid prescribing guidelines released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have harmed pain patients, reduced access to pain care, and failed to reduce drug abuse and overdoses, [according to a large new survey](#) of patients, doctors and healthcare providers. The survey also found signs of a dramatic shift away from opioid prescribing over the past year.

Today marks the one-year anniversary of the guidelines, which discourage the prescribing of opioid medication for chronic pain. The guidelines are meant to be voluntary and only intended for primary care physicians, but are being widely implemented throughout the U.S. healthcare system and having many unintended consequences.

According to the survey, over 70 percent of pain patients say they are no longer prescribed opioid medication or are getting a lower dose. While reducing opioid prescriptions may have been the ultimate goal of the guidelines, it came with a heavy price: Eight out of ten patients say their pain and quality of life are worse. Many are having suicidal thoughts, and some are hoarding opioids or turning to illegal drugs for pain relief.

"I had a doctor pull me off methadone cold turkey after taking it successfully for 15 years for no reason other than the CDC's guidelines. I was in the worst pain of my life," said one patient.

"These guidelines are so incredibly wrong. People are already suffering, myself included. And it's going to get so much worse," predicted another patient.

The online survey of 3,108 pain patients, 43 doctors and 235 other healthcare providers was conducted between February 15 and March 11 by [Pain News Network](#) and the International Pain Foundation (iPain).

"This survey shows that patients and providers are in agreement about the harm the guidelines have caused since their release last year," said Barby Ingle, president of iPain. "When we have government agencies or insurance companies impose poor practices on the pain community, we see failure. A failure to stop abuse and overdoses, hoarding behaviors by well-intentioned patients, increased use of illegal drugs and, worst of all, suicides increase."

There was broad agreement between patients, doctors and healthcare providers that the guidelines have been harmful to patients. When asked if the guidelines had improved the quality of pain care in the United States, over 90 percent said no. Eight out of ten said the guidelines have not been successful in reducing opioid abuse and overdoses.

Some patients admit they are turning to the black market for pain relief.

"Eleven of the 36 people in my support group have admitted using illegally obtained pain medication. Three of those have resorted to heroin because it is cheaper," one patient said.

"My pain clinic sent a letter to all of their patients stating they would no longer prescribe opiates," said another patient. "No other practice would accept me in the area so I have been able to obtain my former meds through the black market. The prices are high and I am tempted to move to heroin as it's much less expensive."

Over the past year, patients reported many negative consequences from the guidelines, with very few positive outcomes:

- 84% say they have more pain and worse quality of life
- 42% have considered suicide because their pain is poorly treated
- 22% are hoarding opioids because they're not sure of future access
- 20% say insurance refused to pay for a pain treatment they needed
- 19% say a pharmacy refused to fill their opioid prescription
- 11% have obtained opioids illegally for pain relief
- 4% found better and safer treatment than opioids
- 4% were given a referral for addiction treatment
- 4% were discharged by a doctor for failing a drug test
- 1% found that they don't really need opioids

Suicidal thoughts and an increasing sense of desperation were common in many of the patients' answers.

"People are killing themselves because their chronic pain isn't being treated, and I become closer and closer to being one of those people," wrote one patient.

To see the complete survey results, [click here](#).

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