

The Opioid Epidemic



We've all heard about the opioid epidemic, but what are opioids and why are they such a big problem?

Opioids are basically a type of pain killing drug. No-one likes pain right? Why wouldn't you want to take drugs to help relieve it?



Do you think Heroin (an opioid drug) is good for you?

In case you're unsure how to answer that question lets discuss some of the actual side effects from taking heroin - nausea, vomiting, itching, insomnia, infections, abscesses, constipation, liver, kidney and lung disease, mental problems, problems with sexual function, and death. Not just a few deaths. Heroin kills thousands of people every single year and it is a highly addictive drug!

Chiropractic care is well known to help people who suffer with neck pain,⁹⁻¹¹ back pain,^{12,13} and headaches.¹⁴



People who see a chiropractor are far less likely to take opioid medication.^{15,16,17}

When they were first released, opioid drugs were falsely marketed to doctors as being an effective pain reliever with a low risk of addiction³ and they gained popularity for the treatment of chronic pain. As it turns out, opioid drugs provide minimal relief for long term pain like arthritis or chronic back pain.^{4,5}

There is no quality scientific evidence that shows they have good, long-term benefits for managing pain.⁶ What there is good evidence of is prescription opioids cause significant harm and thousands of deaths every year.^{6,7} Opioids should not be your first-choice option when you are in pain and should be avoided because there are better choices out there!⁸

What can you do if you are in pain?

Current guidelines promote avoiding drugs and surgery if you have pain, and instead one of your first line choices should be to see a manual therapist, like a chiropractor.⁸ Chiropractic care is well known in the research literature to help people who suffer with neck pain,⁹⁻¹¹ back pain,¹²⁻¹³ and headaches.¹⁴

Research has shown that people who go to see a chiropractor are far less likely to take opioid medication. In fact, a large recent high-quality study reviewed all of the scientific evidence about opioid use in people who see a chiropractor.¹⁵ When the researchers in this study put all of the evidence together, they found that people with back pain who saw a chiropractor were 64% less likely to receive an opioid prescription.

If you go to see a chiropractor when you are in pain, you are much less likely to need to take opioid drugs. That has got to be a good thing for you! And don't forget that chiropractic care has so much more to offer than just helping you with your chronic pain.

Chiropractic care is all about improving the communication between your brain and body so you can function at your best.

If you are suffering from pain, don't reach for a pill - stay positive, move often, eat well, sleep well, and go see your family chiropractor.

Disclaimer and References

This information is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to be professional advice of any kind. Haavik Research Ltd encourages you to make your own health care decisions based on your own research and in partnership with a qualified health care professional.

1. Wolfe S, et al. Connecticut medicine 2016;80(6):325-34. 2. Florence CS, et al. Med Care 2016;54(10). 3. Huyler F. New York Times 2016. 4. Osani MC, et al. Arthritis Care Res Epub 2020/06/26. 5. Mathieson S, et al. J Intern Med 2020;287(5). 6. CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain 2016. 7. CDC Prescription Opioid Overdose Data 2017. 8. Shobbrook M, et al. Chiro J Aus 2020;47(1). 9. Gross A, et al. Cochrane Database Syst Rev 2015(9). 10. Gross A, et al. Man Ther 2010;15(4). 11. Bryans R, et al. J Manipulative Physiol Ther 2014;37(1). 12. Goertz CM, et al. J Electromyogr Kinesiol 2012;22(5). 13. Ruddock JK, et al. J Chiropr Med 2016;15(3). 14. Bryans R, et al. J Manipulative Physiol Ther 2011;34(5). 15. Corcoran KL, et al. Pain Med 2020;21(2). 16. Bastian LA, Gunderson CG, Steffens C, Brackett A, Lisi AJ. Association between chiropractic use and opioid receipt among patients with spinal pain. 17. Whedon JM, Toler AW, Goehl JM, Kazal LA. Association between utilization of chiropractic services for treatment of low-back pain and use of prescription opioids. 18. Whedon JM, Toler AW, Kazal LA, Bezdjian S, Goehl JM, Greenstein J. Impact of chiropractic care on use of prescription opioids in patients with spinal pain.

- **Dr. Heidi Haavik**
BSc(Physiol) BSc(Chiro) PhD
- **Dr. Kelly Holt**
BSc, BSc(Chiro), PGDipHSc, PhD
- **Dr. Jenna Duehr**
BChiro, BHSc(Nursing), MHSc