

Prescribing pain relief

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Re: Newfoundland Battles 'Monster': Oxycontin's deadly grip, Jan 19

The recent coverage about the misuse of potent pain medications in Newfoundland would lead us to believe that these medications are bad for society and should not be used.

More than 20% of adult Canadians have chronic, ongoing pain; over the age of 65 more than a third have pain. Many individuals have pain that is severe in nature, pain that leads to the inability to participate in daily activities and limits enjoyment of life. Eighty percent of visits to physicians' offices deal with pain related complaints.

Opioid (narcotic) pain medications can and do play an important role in helping individuals with chronic pain to have a better life. The risk of becoming addicted to this type of medication, when used properly and under the direction of a physician, is very low. Opioid medications are quite safe when compared to some of the other medications commonly used for treating pain. There are excellent medical guidelines available to help physicians prescribe opioid medications and to screen for abuse of these medications.

There is a big difference between the appropriate medical use of opioid medications by patients with severe pain and the abuse of these substances for illegal purposes.

We should not allow the fact that some individuals abuse these drugs to stop patients from obtaining medications that will relieve suffering from pain.

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