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Pathways to Prescription Opioid Addiction



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Objective

The pathways to addiction for prescription opioids may be more varied compared to other substances of abuse because of their use therapeutically for the treatment of pain.

The objective of this study was to determine the variety of pathways leading to abuse and addiction to pharmaceutical opioid products.

Methods

- 1-2 hour interview to document life course leading to pharmaceutical opioid addiction
- subjects had received treatment for addiction to pharmaceutical opioids and were aged 18 years or older
- multi-site study in Ontario, New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador in Canada
- for the purposes of this study the terms recreational use and therapeutic use were defined based on the stated reason for use, not on the manner or amount of use

Recreational Use Only Periods

Identifiable periods of time when the subject only used the drug for reasons other than pain relief.

Therapeutic Use Only Periods

Identifiable periods of time when the drug was only used to relieve pain.

Mixed/Unclear Use Periods

Mixed Use periods are when the subject used prescription opioids for pain relief but was also using them for other reasons if it is unclear whether the prescription opioid was used purely for pain relief.

Transition Period

A sub-period within one of the other regular use periods that encompasses the time leading up to when the subject self-identifies that they had a problem with their use of prescription opioids.

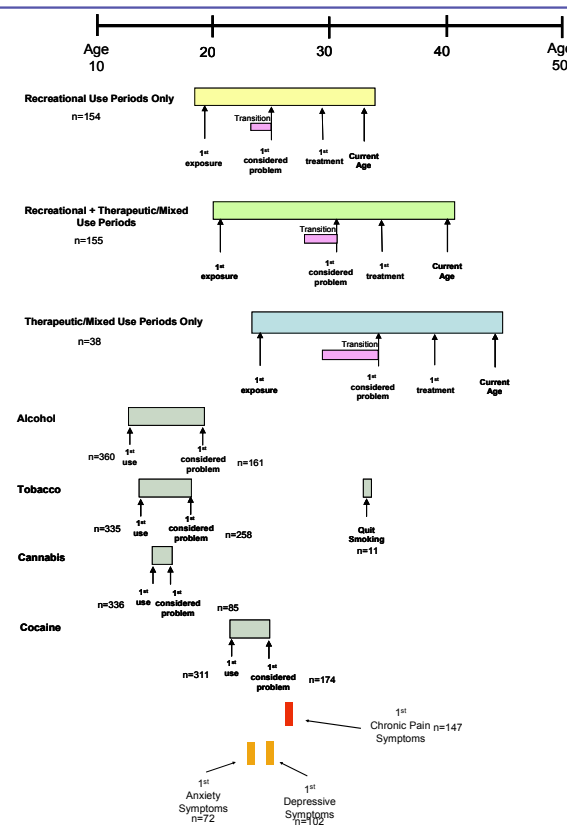
First Exposure

This is the time of the very first use of a prescription opioid. This time period encompasses the first 'supply' of prescription opioids. This may be one tablet (e.g., tried at a party) or a first prescription.

- data also collected on key life events including use of other substances, psychiatric symptoms and medical conditions

Funding Source: Health Canada

Timelines



Transition Period

80% experienced significant events during the transition period

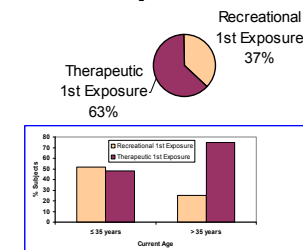
- e.g., relationship stress 39%, work stress 23%
- only 54% had someone express concern over Rx opioid use during this period

College on Problems of Drug Dependence, 72nd Annual Meeting, Hollywood, Florida, June 2011

Results

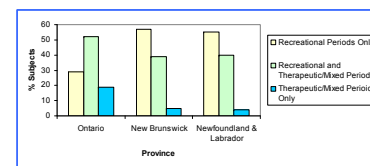
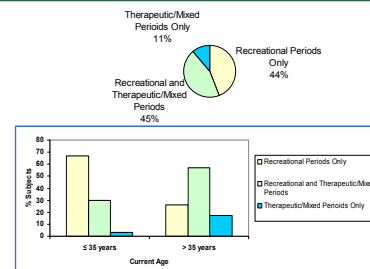
Completed Interviews	n=347
Location	n=150 Ontario n=150 New Brunswick n=37 Newfoundland & Labrador
Age	38 ± 10 years (18 – 63 years)
Gender	65% male 35% female

First Exposures



Therapeutic 1st Exposures

- 49% kept using after 1st prescription ran out for:
 - 76% continued pain
 - 37% to get high
- source to continue:
 - 41% street
 - 31% friends & family
- 12% sold or gave away part of their 1st prescription



Recreational 1 st Exposures	Therapeutic 1 st Exposures
Oxycodone 45%	Codeine 48%
Hydromorphone 23%	Oxycodone 26%
Codeine 15%	Meperidine 11%
Morphine 11%	Morphine 10%

Recreational 1st Exposures

- obtained mostly from friends (for free 50%, or purchased 13%)
- mostly only 1 or 2 tablets
- 35% snorted
- 17% injected
- 17% used due to peer pressure

Conclusions

- only 44% of these subjects with prescription opioid addiction had no periods of therapeutic use in their lifetime
- differences were detected between groups of subjects based on lifetime recreational use only or therapeutic use periods (e.g., age, first exposures, and timelines to addiction and treatment)
- understanding pathways to addiction may help with prevention efforts