



## Risk of Pain Medication Misuse after Spinal Cord Injury: The Role of Substance Use, Personality, and Depression

Clark J.M., Cao Y., Krause J.S. (2017). *Journal of Pain*, 18,166-177.

### WHAT IS THE STUDY ABOUT?

Pain is a frequent and weakening health condition in individuals with spinal cord injury (SCI), with pain severity in persons with SCI higher than the general population. Given the high levels of pain and the effect of pain on physical, mental, and social health in individuals with SCI, understanding the potential for pain medication misuse will help us to better meet the needs of people with SCI. Our purpose was to identify risk of pain medication misuse (PMM) among participants with spinal cord injury (SCI) identifying factors that are related to its use.

### WHO PARTICIPATED AND HOW WAS THE STUDY CONDUCTED?

2,522 participants were identified from a specialty hospital and through the South Carolina SCI Surveillance System Registry. Participants averaged 11.8 years since SCI onset and were average of 50 years of age. The participants completed a Pain Medication Questionnaire (PMQ), which is designed to check the risk for opioid medication misuse in chronic pain patients.

### WHAT DID THE STUDY FIND?

The results suggest that about 18% of those with SCI with at least one painful condition who are prescribed pain medications are at risk for pain medication misuse. This estimate is based on the ways they use the pain medication. This includes running out of medicine early, borrowing pain medication from others, and going to more than one doctor to get medicine. Behavioral risk factors and psychological indicators provided additional explanation of risk of PMM.

### IMPLICATIONS AND OR RECOMMENDATIONS?

Prescriptions for pain medications and nonmedical use of prescription pain relievers have increased greatly over the past 25 years. With increase in use, there is increased risk of dependence and an increase in deaths due to opioid overdose. It is important monitor risk for PMM to reduce poor health outcomes. It is important for people with SCI to be mindful of potential drawbacks of using pain medication. It is important to use non-medication related treatments whenever possible.

PMQ: Adams LL, Gatchel RJ, Robinson RC, et al. Development of a self-report screening instrument for assessing potential opioid medication misuse in chronic pain patients. *J Pain Symptom Manage*. 2004;27:440–459.

The contents of this research brief were developed under a grant from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR grant number 90RT5003). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this research brief do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.