

Opioid Prescribing Treatment Agreement

Oral or transdermal opioid use in non-cancer pain

This document provides information about the use of opioids as part of your pain management plan and seeks your written approval to proceed with the treatment.

Potential Benefits

1. Opioids (morphine-like substances) are more effective in the treatment of acute pain and cancer pain than chronic pain. While opioids can at times abolish acute pain, the expected reduction of chronic pain is only about 20% at the beginning of the treatment period.
2. Opioids can also at times improve other aspects of life including physical functioning and sleep.

Potential Problems

1. The benefits of opioids often become less over time. This is known as tolerance. Sometimes rotating to an alternative opioid can help to maintain pain reduction.
2. Side effects may include mental clouding, difficulties with thinking and memory and reduce motivation – this can make it more difficult to apply pain management techniques and there is evidence that people are less likely to get better from chronic back pain.

Other side effects include sedation, falls, driving impairment, constipation, nausea, itch, sweating, dry mouth, sleep and breathing problems and hormonal imbalance leading to weight gain, sexual dysfunction and osteoporosis.

Sedative effects are more troublesome if opioids are combined with other drugs such as alcohol, benzodiazepines, such as diazepam or gabapentin and pregabalin.

3. In some situations opioids can actually make pain worse. This is called opioid induced hyperalgesia.
4. Dependence and addiction can be problems. Everyone on long-term opioids becomes physically dependent meaning that withdrawal symptoms occur if the treatment is stopped suddenly. Addictive behaviour occurs in a smaller proportion of people treated for ongoing pain.
5. Babies born to women on opioid therapy may require treatment for opioid withdrawal.

Practical Issues

1. Opioids are used as one part of a broad treatment package rather than as stand-alone therapy.
2. An initial opioid trial is undertaken to assess response before a decision is made on whether to begin a period of maintenance therapy. This decision will involve weighing up benefits and side effects.
3. If you are on maintenance treatment you will need to be reviewed by your doctor at regular intervals.
4. Random urinary drug testing can be used as part of an opioid maintenance program.
5. The general policy in regard to opioid therapy is not to give early prescriptions and not to replace lost prescriptions or medication. Therefore if you run out of medication early you may develop a withdrawal state. Although this is uncomfortable it is not life threatening.
6. If your behaviour suggests a problem with drug misuse or addiction then your doctor will consider tapering and ceasing the opioid medication or referral to a Drug and Alcohol service.

Problem behaviours include giving your medication to others, use of your medication in a nonprescribed way, excessive use of other medications (including alcohol), repeated loss of medication and worsening function at home or work.

7. You must keep opioid medication in a safe place and ensure that it is not accessible to others, particularly children.

Goals of Opioid Treatment

My goals for opioid treatment are:

1. Improvement in the following activities in my life

i. _____

ii. _____

2. Improved performance of the following exercises

i. _____

ii. _____

3. Other

i. _____

ii. _____

The planned duration of opioid treatment is _____

During the period of opioid treatment I would like to explore the following active management options – please tick those that you are going to do;

1. Learning more about pain management through the Pain Toolkit or online resources.

2. Physiotherapy exercises or activity to improve fitness and reduce sensitivity

3. Relaxation and mindfulness

4. Doing an online pain management programme such as [The Pain Course](#) or [Pain Trainer](#)

5. Attending [Pain Association Scotland meetings](#)

6. Improving my diet or working towards a healthy weight

7. Improving my sleep – use [Sleepio app](#) or [Sleep hygiene](#)

8. Other _____

Agreement

I have read the information provided and agree to a period of opioid treatment as part of my pain management plan.

Signature: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

More information can be found at [Opioids Aware](#)