

Fewer injured workers getting opioid prescriptions in some states

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(HealthDay)—As the United States continues to grapple with the

painkiller addiction epidemic, a new study reports that fewer injured workers are getting prescriptions for opioids in most of the 25 states included in the research.

The study included information from 337,000 workers' compensation claims in the study states. The researchers also reviewed nearly 1.9 million prescriptions linked to those claims. The information came two 24-month time periods, ending in March 2012 and in March 2014.

The amount of opioid painkillers, such as OxyContin and Percocet, received by [injured workers](#) dropped during both time periods in the majority of the states in the study. Significant reductions—between 20 percent and 31 percent—were seen in Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Oklahoma, North Carolina and Texas, the study found.

Opioid use was most common among workers who were off work for more than seven days. Sixty-five percent to 80 percent of these injured workers who were given pain medications received [opioids](#) in most states included in the current research.

Injured workers in Louisiana, New York and Pennsylvania were given the highest average amounts of opioids in the 25 states in the study.

Simultaneous use of opioids and sedating medications called benzodiazepines occurred among 1 percent to 9 percent of injured workers. Simultaneous use of opioids and muscle relaxants occurred among 30 percent to 45 percent of injured workers.

This information may be used by state officials who wonder if opioid use in their state is higher or lower than other [states](#), said study author Vennela Thumula. She's a policy analyst at Workers Compensation Research Institute in Cambridge, Mass.

The study's findings might also help doctors who wonder whether their prescribing habits are similar to those of their peers. The study [information](#) could also be useful for insurance companies and people working with injured workers, Thumula said in an institute news release.

More information: The U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse has more about [opioids](#).

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