

# Study examines opioid use in patients with rheumatoid arthritis

June 21 2017

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A new analysis indicates that the use of opioid pain medications in older US rheumatoid arthritis patients peaked in 2010 and is now declining slightly. By 2014, 41% of rheumatoid arthritis patients were regular opioid users.

In the analysis of 2006-2014 Medicare data on 70,929 rheumatoid arthritis patients, the most commonly received opioids were hydrocodone and [propoxyphene](#). Regular opioid use increased slowly, peaked in 2010 and decreased following withdrawal of propoxyphene. Hydrocodone and [tramadol](#) use increased commensurately, and overall opioid use declined only slightly. Factors associated with regular opioid use included younger age, female sex, black race, back pain, fibromyalgia, anxiety, and depression.

The *Arthritis & Rheumatology* findings point to substantial use of opioids in an older rheumatoid arthritis patients despite societal concerns regarding potential over-prescribing and addiction in recent years.

**More information:** Jeffrey R Curtis et al, Changing Trends in Opioid Use among U.S. Rheumatoid Arthritis Patients, *Arthritis & Rheumatology* (2017). [DOI: 10.1002/art.40152](https://doi.org/10.1002/art.40152)

Provided by Wiley

Citation: Study examines opioid use in patients with rheumatoid arthritis (2017, June 21)  
retrieved 10 April 2024 from  
<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-06-opioid-patients-rheumatoid-arthritis.html>

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