

Most people initiating opioid prescriptions have very low use trajectory

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Most adults initiating treatment with prescription opioids have relatively

low and time-limited exposure to opioids during a five-year period, according to a study published online Aug. 10 in *JAMA Network Open*.

Natasa Gisev, Ph.D., from the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre in Sydney, and colleagues examined five-year trajectories of prescription opioid use. The analysis included national pharmaceutical claims data linked to 10 national and state datasets for 3.47 million adults initiating an opioid prescription.

The researchers found that the five trajectories included: very low use (75.4%), low use (16.6%), moderate decreasing to low use (2.6%), low increasing to moderate use (2.6%), and sustained use (2.8%). Individuals in the sustained use trajectory group were older than those in the very low use trajectory group (age 65 years and older: 58.4 versus 22.0%); had more comorbidities, including cancer (22.2 versus 4.1%); had increased health services contact, including hospital admissions (51.6 versus 36.9%); had higher use of psychotropic (42.4 versus 16.4%) and other analgesic drugs (47.3 versus 22.9%) prior to opioid initiation; and were initiated on stronger opioids (50.2 versus 20.0%).

"Information on the individual characteristics of people with different trajectories of opioid use may be used to prevent future harms from long-term opioid use through targeted monitoring and interventions," the authors write.

More information: Natasa Gisev et al, Five-Year Trajectories of Prescription Opioid Use, *JAMA Network Open* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.28159](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2023.28159)

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