Medical Xpress

Reducing opioids in tandem with education could lower addiction rates among post-operative patients

July 4 2019

Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Researchers at Emory University School of Medicine have found that giving patients fewer opioid tablets after surgery and educating them

about baseline pain relief options may help lower the chances of patients developing post-operative narcotic addiction.

The results, based on surveying patients at one medical center who were undergoing ACL reconstruction surgery, were published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (*JAMA*) on June 25.

Emory chief of sports medicine and professor of orthopaedics John Xerogeanes, MD, was one of the authors of the paper. He believes there is a significant psychological component to the findings. "It appears that explaining to patients before the surgery that they should take narcotic pain medicine only if their pain is intolerable makes a difference. Then after the procedure, when you recommend they take fewer narcotics, they do."

The average age of patients in the study was around 20 years, which Xerogeanes says is meaningful. "Minimizing the exposure of adolescents and youth to opiates and left-over pain medication after surgery is a step in the right direction given the current opioid epidemic."

Xerogeanes says a key takeaway of the study is to cut the opioid dose for post-operative patients in half; a practice that he says is already underway. "We used to give 50 opiate tablets after surgery. Now we only give 20."

Another next step is to work with alternative non-narcotic medications during post-operative care. "It will be valuable to see if that can help us further," says Xerogeanes.

More information: Kevin X. Farley et al. Association Between Quantity of Opioids Prescribed After Surgery or Preoperative Opioid Use Education With Opioid Consumption, *JAMA* (2019). DOI: 10.1001/jama.2019.6125

Medical Xpress

Provided by Emory University

Citation: Reducing opioids in tandem with education could lower addiction rates among post-operative patients (2019, July 4) retrieved 25 April 2024 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-07-opioids-tandem-addiction-post-operative-patients.html

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.