

# Postpartum women are getting prescribed more opioids than needed

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New University of Minnesota Medical School research finds postpartum women are generally getting prescribed more narcotics than they need.

The study, co-authored by Cresta Jones, MD, FACOG, who is an associate professor in the Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology and Women's Health, was published in "*American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology MFM*." Designed to evaluate what is being done to treat women's pain after delivery in different types of hospitals across the country, the study looked at what medications are being prescribed, how much of those medications are being prescribed and if there are differences between hospitals, as well as between providers within those hospitals.

Dr. Jones found that there is a huge opportunity for improving [patient care](#) after deliveries. Her research showed very apparent, [regional differences](#) for what is being prescribed and how much of those medications are being prescribed. However, despite those differences, she found that there is a general trend among all hospitals of patients being prescribed more narcotics after delivery than they need, leaving them with excess pills.

"Before we are able to attack the nationwide opioid problem, we need to know where the problem is," Dr. Jones said. "We need to figure out what is going on in [different places](#) throughout the country when it comes to postpartum [opioid prescriptions](#), and then use that information to initiate further research that figures out the appropriate prescription standards

for women after delivery."

Dr. Jones believes that establishing a standard guideline will keep patients and their families safer.

"We know that a small percentage of women who leave the hospital with opioids can go on to develop [opioid use disorder](#). We also know that many individuals who suffer from opioid misuse from prescription pills get them from friends and family," she said. "We don't want to increase that problem."

A standard guideline would allow patients to get the medications they need without putting them and their families in danger of unnecessary opioids.

"Our hope is to eventually adopt a standard guideline for postpartum [opioid](#) prescriptions, so we can train the next generation of new learners in the [medical field](#) to use the right amount of opioids and keep our patients safe," Dr. Jones said.

**More information:** Karissa B. Sanchez Traun et al, Opioid prescribing trends in postpartum women: a multicenter study, *American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology MFM* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.ajogmf.2019.100055](#)

Provided by University of Minnesota Medical School

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