

## Publications # 006

### TEN MILLION PEOPLE Take daily opioid pain medications

The number of patients requiring opioid treatment was established by Nora Volkow, MD in [her paper](#) in 2016 (NEJM 374:1253). There are, on average 10 million people, or 3% of the population taking daily opioid pain medications. The National Pain Council (NPC) considers this an accurate number. It corresponds with the Danish population numbers showing that 3% have to take daily opioid pain medication. People who need to take opioid pain medicine every day have serious problems and real medical issues, not just “chronic pain” ([NPC Publication 077](#), [NPC Publication 041](#)).

There are only two types of pain medications available to doctors: opioid pain medications and acetaminophen (Tylenol). Tylenol is an approved treatment for mild to moderate pain, but not severe pain. Opioid pain medications are the only Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved medications for severe pain. If a person with severe pain is not treated with opioid pain medications, then the person in severe pain goes untreated. By not treating a patient, it then becomes a classic case of medical negligence: “failure to treat”. Simply put if one is refused treatment with opiate pain medications then there are no other medications available to provide proper pain relief. Then the patient with the severe and painful disease goes untreated.

### Who are the ten million people who require daily pain control? And what conditions do they have?

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) believes that it is people with “low back pain”, “headaches”, and “sore hips” that comprise those with “chronic pain” but there are far more, the 10 million with rare and painful diseases. The list of rare and painful diseases shows that there are many more than what the CDC has mentioned. The NPC has described what they actually are, including many different rare painful inflammatory diseases, that are not typical household words such as: Complex Regional Pain Syndrome, Adhesive Arachnoiditis, Pudendal Neuritis, Trigeminal Neuralgia, Interstitial Cystitis, and many other diseases as listed in the [NPC publication #058](#) (“Catalog of Rare Painful Diseases”).

These specific disease names are to replace the vague term “chronic pain” which has negative connotations. These are very real diseases, unimaginably devastating to an individual’s daily function, especially when treatment is withheld. (See [NPC publication #077](#) “Catalog of Rare Painful Diseases”).

In order to estimate how many long-term pain patients have been forced off their critical medication regimens we need to know an approximation of how many there are to start the calculation.

We will use the conservative Volkow estimate, average of 10 million people who have a daily need for opioid pain medications, people the NPC has found are those with rare long-term painful diseases. The CDC says 20% of people have chronic pain, 8% with high impact pain, and from National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA) 3% with pain bad enough to require opioid pain medication around the clock. We have chosen the more conservative 3% figure for our calculations on the numbers of people harmed. The real figure is more than likely higher than the one NPC is presenting.

The “CDC Guideline has harmed many patients”, says the American Medical Association (AMA) in a [public letter](#) to the CDC on June 16, 2020, and the CDC has done nothing to reverse the problem. Just how many people have been or are currently affected, the AMA had no figures nor does the government.

Based on the 10 million patients here, with long term painful diseases (“chronic pain”), The NPC has estimated seven million of those have been harmed by the CDC’s desire to reduce the use of opioid medications, and without valid medical reasoning. (See [NPC publication #071](#) “Seven Million Harmed”).

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