

Chronic Pain and Prescription Opioid Use: Women's Experiences and Implications for Policy and Practice

Category: Poster Presentation (In-Person)

Abstract Body

Objectives: Women report more chronic pain than men and are more likely to be prescribed and rely on opioids for pain management. Yet, women's experiences with prescription opioid use for chronic pain management, and how these experiences impact policy and practice in the context of healthcare are not well documented. This poster describes interview findings from a project that developed sex, gender, trauma, and equity-informed resources reflecting a wide range of women's lived experiences with chronic pain and prescription opioid use.

Methods: We interviewed 22 women who used prescribed opioids for chronic pain management. Recruitment was done in-person and through social media with a focus on recruiting diverse women from different geographic and social locations in Canada. Data was analyzed using intersectional thematic analysis in NVivo20.

Results: Six themes were described, including the benefits and harms of prescription opioid use, interactions with healthcare providers, the complexities of women's lives, information needs, stigma, and pain management strategies. The role of prescribed opioids on women's quality of life, and differences in care depended on social factors such as race, class, age, sexual orientation, chronic condition, geography, self-advocacy, access adequate care, and stigma associated with the opioid crisis. Women emphasized the need for healthcare providers to have enhanced understanding of women's experiences of chronic pain, the benefits and harms of opioid use for women who live with chronic pain, and the need for comprehensive pain management plans.

Conclusion: Women's perspectives and experiences indicated how sex and gender related factors affect their experiences of pain and prescribed opioids, and interactions with health care prescribers. This research demonstrates an urgent need for evidence-based policy and practice that is sex and gender informed and responsive to the lived realities of women with chronic pain in a non-stigmatizing and harm reductive manner.

Key Words (Max 5)

- Opioids/Opiates
- Pain
- Sociocultural factors

- Stigma
- Women/pregnancy/neonatal issues

Learning Objective #1

To increase understanding of diverse women's experiences with prescription opioid use for chronic pain.

Learning Objective #2

To discuss sex, gender, trauma, and equity-related factors that impact experiences with opioid use for pain management.

Reference #1

Hachey, L.M., Gregg, J.A., Pavlik-Maus, T.L. and Jones, J.S., Health implications and management of women with opioid use disorder. *Journal of nursing education and practice*, 2017. 7(8): p. 57.

Reference #2

Hemsing, N., Greaves, L., Poole, N., & Schmidt, R. (2016). Misuse of Prescription Opioid Medication among Women: A Scoping Review. *Pain research & management*, 2016, 1754195.

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