



RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT ON

Pain Care and Opioids

Determining how to best treat pain is challenging for patients and clinicians. The alarming increase in opioid use and potentially fatal misuse has focused national attention on how to use these drugs appropriately and safely and treat opioid use disorders while also ensuring that people dealing with pain have a range of safe and effective treatment options available to them.

100 MILLION

adults in the United States
are affected by chronic pain

Source: National Academy of Medicine

42,249

Americans died from opioid
overdoses in 2016

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

\$600 BILLION

Estimated total annual costs
related to pain

Source: National Institutes of Health

Addressing the Roots of the Opioid Crisis and Inadequate Pain Management

PCORI funds **comparative clinical effectiveness research (CER)**, which studies which healthcare options work best for which patients, based on their needs and preferences. PCORI-funded CER is filling the full continuum of evidence gaps in regards to both pain not related to cancer and opioid use disorders. **The goal is not only to improve treatment for noncancer-related pain and to prevent and treat opioid addiction but also to address the factors that cause these problems.**

PCORI-FUNDED CER STUDIES ARE DETERMINING WHAT'S MOST EFFECTIVE IN:

				
Managing acute and chronic pain	Preventing unsafe prescribing of opioids	Reducing reliance on opioids among people already using them	Preventing opioid use disorders	Treating opioid use disorders

STUDY SPOTLIGHTS

Alternative Therapies for Opioid-Treated Chronic Low Back Pain

Many people with chronic low back pain as well as those who care for them are interested in alternatives to opioids, given the risks of addiction. This study is comparing how well two such alternative therapies—cognitive behavioral therapy and mindfulness meditation—work in easing pain and helping people reduce or discontinue opioid use. More details about this project are at www.pcori.org/Zgierska010.

CER Answers Key Questions

PCORI is funding CER that will provide answers to such questions as:



After hearing so many stories of people who struggle with opioid addiction, I'm afraid to use these drugs even though my low back pain is bad. Would mindfulness meditation work as well as a pain drug for me?



I'm worried about my dependence on an opioid I use to treat the chronic pain I developed after serving in Iraq. How well do alternative treatments work at lowering the amount of medication someone like me needs while keeping my pain under control?



I'm not comfortable speaking up when I don't understand what my doctor tells me about treating my chronic pain. How can I get more involved in managing my pain?

STUDY SPOTLIGHTS

Minimizing Risks of High-Dose Opioid Use among People with Pain

This study compared clinics that implemented an initiative prompting physicians to be more cautious in prescribing opioids to clinics that did not in Washington state. Physicians following the initiative prescribed fewer high opioid doses but their patients did not report worse pain control. The results appeared in the *Journal of Pain*. More details about this project are at www.pcori.org/VonKorff009.

Boosting Patients' Involvement in Their Pain Management

This study focuses on people who are living with chronic pain and starting regular opioid use. It is comparing outcomes of patients receiving standard pain care to those of patients who complete four group "patient-empowerment" sessions that educate them on pain management tools, help them communicate with their doctors, and become more actively involved in their care decisions. More details about this project are at www.pcori.org/Campbell011.

As of April 2019, PCORI has awarded

\$392 MILLION TO FUND 95

CER studies related to pain care management and/or opioid use.

BY THE NUMBER OF PCORI-FUNDED STUDIES

Most Studied Populations of Interest

