

Use of Narcotics in the Treatment of Chronic or Recurrent Pain

Chronic pain is a common problem, affecting millions. Some people with chronic pain or recurrent pain visit the emergency department to help them when they have an exacerbation of their pain. The emergency department specializes in treating acute medical conditions, including acute pain. The medical literature clearly demonstrates that chronic or recurrent pain should NOT be treated in the same manner as acute pain.

Medications sometimes used for severe, acute pain, such as narcotics, have not shown to be effective for chronic pain. When used for chronic pain, narcotics only offer short term relief. Narcotics have substantial side effects that can become life-threatening. In addition, drug addiction can result when narcotics are used for the treatment of chronic or recurrent pain. We are joining other emergency departments that have made an effort to cut back on the growing levels of overuse, inappropriate use, and abuse of these medications.

Your well-being is our primary concern. We have developed a policy to assist in the management of chronic or recurrent pain in our emergency department. This policy prohibits the use of narcotic pain medications to treat chronic or recurrent pain. Prescription refills for controlled substances, such as narcotics, that have been lost or have expired will not be refilled. It is the patient's responsibility to maintain active prescriptions with your regular physician. All physicians and midlevel providers in the emergency department are bound to follow this policy.

We are happy to treat your pain with a wide variety of non-narcotic medications. There are appropriate, effective treatments for your chronic pain, but they must be administered or prescribed by your own personal physician or a chronic pain specialist. We can help refer you to appropriate follow-up care. Our goal is to provide the best possible care to every patient treated in our emergency department.

