

## Combination of Prescribed Opioid Analgesics with Alcohol or another Illegal Drug



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**BACKGROUND:** Studies published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in 2006 and 2009 (“How Young Adults Obtain Prescription Pain Relievers for Nonmedical Use” and “Trends in Non-medical Use of Prescription Pain Relievers: 2002 to 2007”) introduce evidence of a trend of abusing prescribed opioid analgesics. This issue has received little attention and there has been no empirical research into it in the Czech Republic. **AIM:** This feasibility study focuses on the identification of evidence for the abuse of opioid analgesics among Czech patients attending centres and outpatient clinics providing (chronic) pain treatment. **METHODS:** The data were obtained by means of a survey conducted among i) chronic pain patients treated with opioid analgesic medication for at least two years ( $N = 99$ ) and ii) physicians and nurses working at pain treatment centres and outpatient

clinics ( $N = 4$ ). The processed data are mostly presented using graphs and contingency tables with the appropriate  $p$ -values of a chi-square test for the independence of two categorical variables. **RESULTS:** We identified that 20.5% of the patients ( $n=17$ ) in the sample ( $N=83$ ) had used prescribed opioid analgesics without medical indication, 22.9% of the patients ( $n=19$ ) had combined opioid analgesics with alcohol, and 20.5% of the patients ( $n=17$ ) had combined prescribed medication with drugs other than alcohol. In addition, this feasibility study allowed us to formulate recommendations for further studies, such as a consideration of a different data collection design. **CONCLUSIONS:** We were able to address the problem of combining prescribed opioid analgesics and over-the-counter medications with alcohol among the 50–64 age group.

**KEY WORDS:** PRESCRIBED OPIOID ANALGESICS – CHRONIC PAIN – ALCOHOL – ILLEGAL DRUGS – ABUSE

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