

Awareness Day Statement

Opioid Painkiller Addiction Awareness Day (OPAAD)

September is both Pain Awareness month, a month dedicated to raising public awareness of issues in the area of pain and pain management, and National Recovery month, a month dedicated to raising awareness about issues related to addiction. As a result of combining these two initiatives, September 22nd 2015 has been registered as the first Opioid Painkiller Addiction Awareness Day (OPAAD). By raising awareness of opioid painkiller dependence (OPD) – an addiction issue that can be an unintended consequence for some people taking opioid analgesics – the campaign aims to start a dialogue and reassure people who are addicted to opioid painkillers, that they have nothing to hide. Help and support are available for both patients and families affected by OPD.

OPAAD 2015 will highlight the need for improved service provision and provide people with the confidence to recognise the symptoms in themselves, or their loved ones, and ultimately help them find the support they need.

Painkiller addiction can occur with both prescription opioids (e.g. tramadol, codeine, oxycodone) as well as over the counter opioid painkillers (e.g. codeine with paracetamol). With over 9 million people in the UK believed to have an opioid prescriptionⁱ and with rates of prescribing doubling between 2004-2012, there are likely many people in the UK at risk.ⁱⁱ Untreated opioid painkiller addiction can increase the risk of various physical and mental health conditions.ⁱⁱⁱ In England and Wales during 2014 the number of times an opioid medication was mentioned on a death certificate was 809, almost approaching heroin and morphine (952).^{iv} This is greater than the number of times cocaine, cannabis, amphetamines, and benzodiazepines were mentioned on a death certificate (combined total 801) and in the last 3 years (2012-2014) the number of times an opioid medication has been mentioned on a death certificate has risen by 40%. Worryingly, a recent survey found that nearly 60% of people in the UK are unaware that there might be a risk of becoming addicted to common painkillers in as little as three days.^{v,vi}

If you are looking for further information on opioid painkiller addiction please visit the TurnToHelp website <http://www.turntohelp.co.uk/> or follow us on Twitter @TurntoHelpUK.

References

ⁱ Alho, H. and Strydom, M. (2013). "Prevalence of prescription opioid-dependency in Europe and risk factors for abuse." Presented at the International Society of Addiction Medicine Annual Meeting 2013. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 21–23 November 2013

ⁱⁱ NHS Business Services Authority: NSAIDs and Analgesics National Charts. 2013.

ⁱⁱⁱ Fischer, B. and Argento, E. (2012). "Prescription opioid related misuse, harms, diversion and interventions in Canada: a review." *Pain Physician* 15(3 Suppl): ES191–203

^{iv} Office of National Statistics. Deaths Related to Drug Poisoning, England and Wales – 2013. Available from <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/subnational-health3/deaths-related-to-drug-poisoning/england-and-wales---2013/index.html> Last accessed September 2015

^v Data on file: IND-UK-0001

^{vi} NHS Choices, Nurofen Plus. Available from

<http://www.nhs.uk/medicinesguides/pages/MedicineOverview.aspx?medicine=Nurofen%20Plus> Last accessed September 2015