

Recognizing Opioid Abuse

Introduction

This resource, adapted from the research literature, contains a brief table of information to guide recognition of opioid abuse or addiction in patients receiving long-term opioid therapy. The table lists three components of addiction: loss of control, craving and preoccupation with use, and use despite negative consequences (the three “C’s”) and possible signs or symptoms of each of these components that may indicate an opioid abuse problem.

Table: Recognizing Opioid Abuse and/or Addiction in Patients Taking Chronic Opioids

Components of Addiction <i>The 3- “C’s”</i>	Possible expressions in patients on chronic opioids
Loss of <u>C</u> ontrol	1. Reports lost/stolen medication 2. Calls for early refills 3. Seeks opioids from other sources 4. Withdrawal symptoms noted at appointments
<u>C</u> raving, preoccupation with use	1. Recurring requests for increases in opioids 2. Increasing pain despite lack of progression of disease 3. Dismissive of non-opioid treatments
Use despite negative <u>C</u> onsequences	1. Over-sedation/somnolence 2. Decreases in activity, functioning and/or relationships

Adapted from:

Savage SR et al. NIDA. Addiction Science in Clinical Practice. Vol. 4, June 2008

Manchikanti L et. al. Pain Physician 2008; Opioids Special Issue I I:SI55-SI80