

Factors driving the inappropriate prescribing of opioid analgesics in primary care: a systematic review

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Opioids are strong pain-relieving medicines that are commonly prescribed by general practitioners for the management of persistent pain. Persistent pain affects over [27 million](#) people in the United Kingdom. It is complex and difficult to treat.

In the past two decades, the prescribing of opioids have more than doubled in England. However, there is limited scientific evidence for the use of opioids in persistent pain while there is clear evidence that opioids cause more harms than benefits. Of particular concern is the use of opioids at high doses. Various studies have found different factors that may be linked to the prescribing of opioids at high doses. But, we don't have a study that combines all of these factors so we can better identify who is receiving opioids at high doses.

We are conducting a systematic review of observational studies to synthesise existing evidence on the use of high dose opioids. We have searched various databases to identify relevant studies and are combining the results to provide an overview of all factors that are linked to the use of opioids at high doses. This will provide doctors and policymakers with a list that will help identify patients who may be experiencing harms from their opioid medications.