



In Motion

Highlighting Articles Advancing Pain Research in Canada and the World

Featured article:

Bilevicius, E., Sommer, J.L., Keough, M.T., & El-Gabalawy, R. (2020). **An Examination of Comorbid Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Chronic Pain on Substance Misuse in a Canadian Population-Based Survey.** *The Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 65(6), 418-425. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0706743719895340>

Key insights from the study:

- **Impact on Substance Misuse:** The study shows that people with both generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) and chronic pain, like back pain or migraines, have higher rates of misusing opioids compared to those with only GAD. Chronic pain conditions and co-occurring GAD was not associated with elevated rates of drug or alcohol abuse/dependence.
- **Role of Multiple Pain Conditions:** Results suggest that having more than one pain condition may drive the effect between certain pain conditions and opioid misuse.
- **Need for Screening:** The findings highlight the importance of checking for opioid misuse in people with GAD and chronic pain.

What happened?

Researchers analyzed data from the 2012 Canadian Community Health Survey-Mental Health, which included 25,113 people. They focused on individuals with arthritis, back pain and migraine headaches. The study used statistical methods to understand the relationship between GAD, chronic pain, and substance misuse, including nonmedical opioid use, drug abuse/dependence, and alcohol abuse/dependence.

Why is it important?

This study shows how having both GAD and chronic pain increases the risk of opioid misuse. For example, people with GAD and chronic back pain or migraines have higher rates of opioid misuse compared to those with only GAD. Understanding these risks helps healthcare providers better identify and support people who are at risk. The findings also highlight the need for care plans that address both anxiety and chronic pain to prevent substance misuse, particularly with respect to opioids.

What now?

The study suggests that healthcare providers should be careful when prescribing opioids to patients with GAD and chronic pain, because of the higher risk of misuse. They should check for signs of substance misuse and provide treatment plans that address both anxiety and pain. Future research should explore the best ways to manage these conditions together to reduce the risk of opioid misuse and improve patient outcomes.