

RESEARCH MINUTE

January 2013

High opioid doses associated with risk of road trauma among drivers in Ontario

Adult drivers in Ontario who were prescribed moderate to high doses of opioid medications were up to 42% more likely to experience a road accident resulting in injury than drivers who were taking lower doses of these drugs.

What does this mean?

- Drivers who were prescribed higher doses of opioids – a type of prescription painkiller - were more likely to visit the hospital with injuries from motor vehicle accidents than drivers who were prescribed lower doses of opioids.

Recommendations

- ✓ Be aware that taking a high dose of opioid medications can affect your driving ability.
- ✓ You may want to consider avoiding driving if you are being prescribed high doses (>100 mg morphine or equivalent) of opioids.

How do we know this?

The ODPRN examined emergency department (ED) visits for injuries related to road accidents and prescription information from patients with public drug funding between the ages of 18 and 64 years. All of the selected participants were prescribed opioid medications, but were split into two groups: those who visited the ED for injuries resulting from a road accident, and those who did not. The researchers performed a statistical analysis to determine if the dose of opioid medication prescribed to participants (very low, low, moderate, high and very high doses) made them more likely to visit the emergency department because of road trauma. When examining a general group of commuters (drivers, passengers, pedestrians, cyclists, etc.), they found that the dose of opioids prescribed did not affect the likelihood of being injured in a road accident. However, when researchers looked specifically at people who were taking opioids and were *drivers*, they found that opioid medication dose significantly increased their risk of an ED visit for a road accident by up to 42%. Drivers who were taking higher doses were more likely to be in a road accident than people who were taking lower doses of opioid medication.

Gomes T, Redelmeier DA, Juurlink DN, Dhalla IA, Camacho X, Mamdani MM. Opioid dose and risk of roadtrauma in Canada: a population-based study. *JAMA Intern Med*. Published Online First: 14 January 2013.

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