

#133 David Kim

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The Effect of Covid-19 on the Opioid Epidemic

The opioid epidemic is a serious national crisis that has detrimental impacts on both public health, and social and economic welfare. With the onset of Covid-19 pandemic, healthcare providers abruptly changed their care delivery. In-person clinic visits were changed to telemedicine, and elective cases were cancelled. Due to a growing concern that chronic pain patients may have limited resources from this unprecedented time of social and economic shutdown, organizations such as American Medical Association and Drug Enforcement Administration have supported implementing measures to ensure these patients achieve adequate pain control by increasing access to pain medications, but at the cost of reducing barriers and restrictions to controlled substances.

Our study focuses on the change in opioid consumption in chronic pain patients who were unable to undergo their interventional pain procedure during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is a retrospective chart review study that looked at chronic pain patients who were scheduled for an interventional pain procedure from the months of March 1st to May 30th, 2020. Subjects were classified into groups based on their cancelled interventional pain procedure, including ESI, SI joint injections, and intra-articular facet joint injections. For each patient, the frequency and dose of each opioid prior to and after notification of their cancelled procedure were recorded. The change in opioid consumption was calculated by measuring the change in morphine milligram equivalents per day.

The mean change in opioid consumption (MME/day) in all subjects showed a statistically significant increase of +14.96 (95% CI [2.04, 27.87], $p = 0.02$). This may justify the need for a protocol that allows for elective interventional pain procedures to continue in a future pandemic.