

Rehabilitation Physicians of Georgia, P.C. (RPG) Informed Consent for Using Opioids to Treat Pain

Opioid Medications Are a Powerful and Often Highly Effective Tool in Treating Pain

- a. They also have serious side effects and are highly controlled because of their potential for misuse and abuse
- b. Used properly they can help restore comfort, function, and quality of life
- c. For patients with pain, working in concert with their physician(s), opioid medications can be used safely and successfully

1. Using Opioid Medications to Treat Pain

- a. These medications are used to treat moderate-to-severe pain of any type
- b. These medications are best understood as potentially effective tools that can help reduce pain, improve function, and improve quality of life
- c. Using these medications requires that both the physician and patient work together to ensure the best outcome, lowest side effects, and fewest manageable complications

2. Where Do Opioids work?

- a. Opioid medications work at the injury site, the spinal cord, and the brain
- b. They dampen pain, but do not treat the underlying injury
- c. They may help to prevent acute pain from becoming persistent chronic pain
- d. These medications may work differently on different people because of a number of factors determined by the individuals make up
- e. Side effects and complications will also vary

3. Effects of Opioids at the Site of the Injury

- a. When a person is injured the number of opioid receptors in the area of the injury rapidly increases making opioid medications effective for treating pain
- b. When opioids are used under the circumstances of moderate-to-severe pain, much of their activity is directed to the site of the injury
- c. This may explain why opioids used to treat appropriate pain are less likely to cause mental side effects, such as euphoria
- d. Once the pain is under effective control your doctor will seek to reduce the amount of medication to effectively maintain pain control

4. Opioids Also Work in the Central Nervous System at the Spinal Cord and the Brain

- a. Probably the strongest effect of opioid medications is at the spinal cord, where they can decrease pain signals being sent toward the brain
- b. Opioids reduce pain at several sites of the brain to decrease the pain signal sent through the spinal cord from the injury site
- c. The brain sends its own signal to the spinal cord to further reduce the pain signal

5. What To Expect When You Take Opioid Medications for Pain

- a. Pain relief
- b. Reduction of stress caused by pain
- c. Side effects

6. What Not To Expect From Treatment with Opioid Medications

- a. Cure of the underlying injury
- b. Total elimination of the pain
- c. Loss of ability to feel other physical pain

7. Negative Effects of Opioid Medications Vary in Different People

- a. Side effects
 - i. Common effects include constipation, dry mouth, sweating, nausea, drowsiness, euphoria, forgetfulness, difficulty urinating, itching
 - ii. Uncommon effects include confusion, hallucinations, shortness of breath, depression, lack of motivation
- b. Physical dependency
 - i. These medications will cause a physical dependency marked by abstinence syndrome when they are stopped abruptly. If these medications are stopped or rapidly decreased the patient will experience chills, goose bumps, profuse sweating, increased pain, irritability, anxiety, agitation, and diarrhea. The medicines will not cause these symptoms if taken as prescribed and any decision to stop these medications should be done under the supervision of your physician in a slow downward taper
- c. Misuse of medications
 - i. Addiction: This is a psychological condition of use of a substance despite self harm. Between six and ten percent of the population of the United States have problems with substance abuse and addiction.
 - ii. Diversion: Often people who are addicts will try to get pain patients treated with opioids to give or sell their medications to them. It is essential to never share your opioid medications
- d. Driving
 - i. Studies of patients with chronic pain demonstrate improved driving skills when taking opioids, but individuals may have problems driving and need to realistically assess their own skills, as well as listen to others who drive with them to determine if they should be driving while taking these medications. Do not operate a motor vehicle if you feel mentally impaired using opioid medications. You are responsible for exhibiting good judgment

8. Consequences of Failure To Follow These and the Policies Outlined in the *RPG Pain Agreement*

- a. Your physician may require a consultation with an addiction specialist
- b. Your physician may decide to discontinue treatment with controlled substances
- c. Your physician may require more frequent visits
- d. Your physician may cease all treatment

9. Ongoing Treatment with Opioid Medications

- a. Is based on the physician’s judgment of benefits outweighing problems
- b. The treating physician can adjust and/or discontinue treatment at his/her discretion

Patient Name (Print): _____

Patient Signature: _____

Physician Signature: _____

Date: _____