The Opioid Crisis May Affect The Pain Of Cancer Patients.

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New research done by Dr. Henry Park and his colleagues at the Yale School of Medicine shows that oncologists have started prescribing less opioids for their patients. Researchers believe that this is in response to the national opioid epidemic. Considering that opioid prescriptions from oncologists and other doctors have declined almost 21%, it is not surprising that cancer patients may have a harder time receiving the necessary treatments for managing their pain. Doctors have begun prescribing gabapentin, a safer alternative to opioids, instead of long-acting drugs like oxycodone. According to the researchers, the decline in opioid prescriptions could be a result of an inappropriate application of opioid laws, guidelines, and legislations intended for non-cancer patients.

The researchers looked at Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services prescription information for 21,041 oncologists and 723,861 non-oncologists. Overall, they saw a 30% decrease in opioid prescriptions among oncologists and 5.9% increase in the prescription of gabapentin. They also found that 43 states showed a decrease in prescriptions of opioids by oncologists. In 4 states, opioid prescriptions from oncologists declined more than those from other kinds of doctors.

Although opioid misuse and addiction is something to be wary of, many cancer patients require these drugs to manage their pain. Further research is needed to fully understand how these changes are impacting cancer patients and to learn how to manage the pain of cancer patients effectively.

If you are a cancer patient or know one, it is important to speak openly with health care providers to get all required care.

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