

CHRONIC PAIN AND THE OPIOID CRISIS

Prescribing opioids for chronic pain conditions has been associated with a significant increase in opioid-related deaths, a high risk of dependency and addiction, and other side effects associated with long-term opioid use.

- An estimated **27 million people** suffered from opioid use disorders in 2016.
- The number of **opioid overdoses has increased in recent years**, in part due to the increased use of opioids in the management of chronic non-cancer pain.
- In the United States of America alone in 2016, there were an estimated 63,632 deaths due to drug overdose, a 21% increase from previous years. This was largely due to a **rise in deaths associated with prescription opioids**.

How can physical therapy help?



PHYSICAL THERAPY IS PART OF THE SOLUTION

Physical therapy is effective in treating and reducing chronic pain.

A physical therapist can design an individualised treatment programme combining the most appropriate techniques to address the underlying problem, including:

Exercise: people who exercise regularly experience less pain

Stress management: mindfulness, relaxation, visualisation, and graded exposure to stress-producing events can help people reduce pain and improve their functional capacities

Sleep hygiene: physical therapists can help educate people about appropriate sleep hygiene to help combat the vicious cycle of persistent pain

Pain neuroscience education: physical therapists can educate people about modern pain science that highlights the processes involved in pain



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