Study Examines Opioid Use in Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis

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**Contacts:**
Penny Smith +44 (0)1243 770448 sciencenewsroom@wiley.com

A new analysis indicates that the use of opioid pain medications in older US rheumatoid arthritis patients peaked in 2010 and is now declining slightly. By 2014, 41% of rheumatoid arthritis patients were regular opioid users.

In the analysis of 2006-2014 Medicare data on 70,929 rheumatoid arthritis patients, the most commonly received opioids were hydrocodone and propoxyphene. Regular opioid use increased slowly, peaked in 2010 and decreased following withdrawal of propoxyphene. Hydrocodone and tramadol use increased commensurately, and overall opioid use declined only slightly. Factors associated with regular opioid use included younger age, female sex, black race, back pain, fibromyalgia, anxiety, and depression.

The *Arthritis & Rheumatology* findings point to substantial use of opioids in an older rheumatoid arthritis patients despite societal concerns regarding potential over-prescribing and addiction in recent years.

**Additional Information**

**Link to Study:** [http://doi.wiley.com/10.1002/art.40152](http://doi.wiley.com/10.1002/art.40152)

**About Journal**

*Arthritis & Rheumatology*, an official journal of the American College of Rheumatology, is a peer-reviewed publication for scientists and clinicians interested in the natural history, pathophysiology, treatment, and outcome of the rheumatic diseases.

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