

## **Use of Topical Opioids by Intractable Pain Patients**

Forest S Tennant

*Veract Intractable Pain Clinic, West Covina, CA, United States*

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to determine how patients self-administer topical opioids. Opioid receptors propagate in painful, inflamed peripheral tissue. Topical opioids will relieve pain when applied over these areas even though the topical opioid does not enter the serum in detectable levels.

### **Method**

Thirty-three (33) intractable pain patients between the ages of 29 to 82 years were the subjects. All claimed benefit from topical opioid administration so they were surveyed by written questionnaire to determine how they self-administered their topical opioid. Patients used one of three opioids in the following concentrations per ounce of base cream: morphine 30 to 90mg; oxycodone 30 to 90mg; or hydromorphone 8 to 24mg. Patients were issued up to 16 ounces a month and given no specific instructions relative to situation, time, or frequency of application but simply instructed to use "as needed". Minimal time of topical opioid usage was six consecutive months.

### **Results**

Intractable (constant, incurable) pain was present in all patients for over 2 years in duration and primarily caused by these conditions: spine degeneration 20 (60.8%); neuropathies 8 (24.2%) or arthropathies 5 (15.2%). All patients used their topical opioid at least once daily. Eleven (33.3%) used it routinely at the same time each day to suppress their persistent pain. Twenty-two (22. 66.7%) used it for breakthrough pain or flares. Eight (8, 14.2%) used it routinely and for flares.

### **Conclusions**

Intractable pain patients use topical opioids on a daily basis. The majority use it for breakthrough pain or flares. A minority use it routinely.