

What works better for long-term pain? Opioids or Non-Opioids?

What We Already Knew: We knew that opioids were more likely to cause serious harms such as injuries, breathing trouble, addiction, and even death.

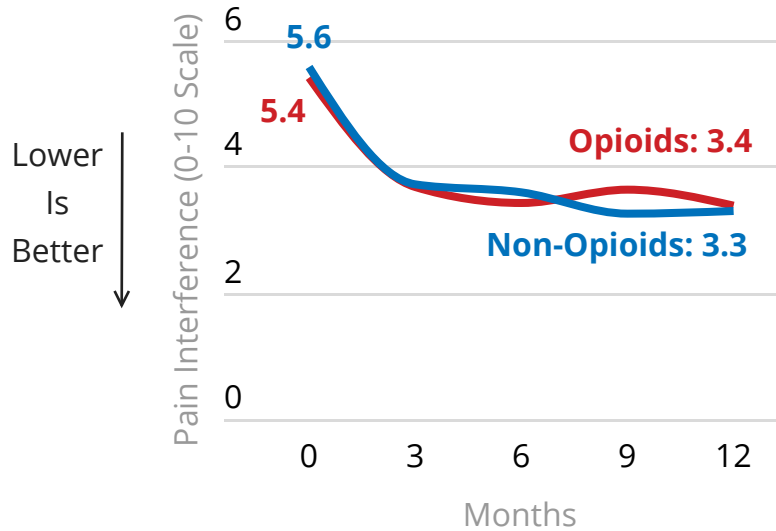
What We Didn't Know: Patients and doctors didn't know if opioids worked better for long-term pain than non-opioid pain medications.

What Was Studied

VA doctors and researchers recruited 240 VA patients with long-term back, hip, or knee pain. One group received opioids, such as morphine and oxycodone. The other group received non-opioids, such as lidocaine cream, acetaminophen, and naproxen. After one year, this is what they found:

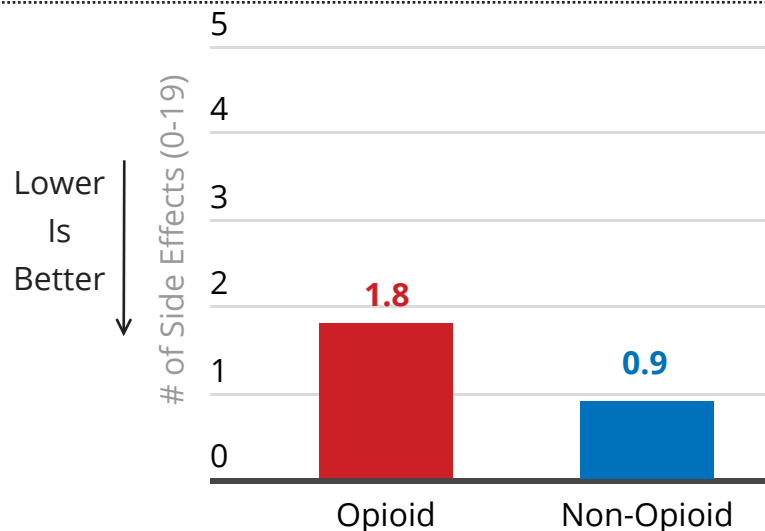
How much does pain interfere with your...

general activity, mood, walking ability, normal work, relations with other persons, sleep, and enjoyment of life?



Most study participants in **both groups improved** over the one-year study.

Patient-reported, medication **side effects**



Medication side effects were **twice as common** in the opioid group.

VA doctors and researchers concluded that opioids did not work better than non-opioids for long-term pain

See the full study from the *Journal of the American Medical Association*:

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2673971>

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Office of Research & Development