

The National Pancreas Foundation
The Opioid Crisis and Patient Access to Effective Therapy
Statement of Principles

About The Foundation

The National Pancreas Foundation provides hope for those suffering from pancreatitis and pancreatic cancer by funding cutting edge research, advocating for new and better therapies, and providing support and education for patients, caregivers, and health care professionals.

Chronic Pancreatitis and Opioid-Based Therapy

Chronic pancreatitis is inflammation of the pancreas that does not heal or improve, but progresses over time and leads to permanent damage. Chronic pancreatitis eventually impairs a patient's ability to digest food and make pancreatic hormones. Significant pain associated with chronic pancreatitis can seriously reduce a patient's quality of life.

As a result of the various governmental responses to the opioid epidemic, patients with chronic pancreatitis who utilize opioids for the appropriate treatment of their severe pain are facing an ever-increasing threat to their quality of life due to access challenges.

Key Issues for Policymakers

- The opioid epidemic must be addressed, but patients with serious conditions must be protected so they can maintain access to the narcotic pain medication they rely on to get through the day, to participate in the workplace, and enjoy a reasonable quality of life.
- The community needs assurances that regulations designed to curb the abuse of opiates do not inadvertently penalize patients suffering from a serious disease who use these medications appropriately under the direction of a physician.
- Any legislation, policy, or regulation aimed at combating the opioid crisis must recognize the specific needs of chronic pancreatitis patients so that they can receive the medications their doctors prescribe for them to treat this painful chronic disease.
- When properly managed with a healthcare professional, there is a relatively low risk of progressing into substance abuse, and the physician-patient relationship must be maintained with clinical judgment preserved.
- Opioid related fatalities are 90 – 95% caused by illicitly obtained drugs, NOT by legally prescribed drugs for chronic disease patients.¹
- Research and development in acute and chronic pain treatment - including pharmacological, non-pharmacological, interventional, and multimodal pain management - is essential to relieve the burden of pain and mitigate the use of opioids. There is a need to develop pharmacological and non-pharmacological pain treatments without euphoric and addictive effects, including innovative devices to treat pain without medications.

¹ Seth, Puja, et al. "Quantifying the Epidemic of Prescription Opioid Overdose Deaths." *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 108, no. 4, 2018, pp. 500–502., doi:10.2105/ajph.2017.304265.