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Nonmedical use of prescription opioids by young adults for the self-treatment of chronic pain: A national shame and an example of the crisis in opioid therapy in the United States**Steven D Passik**

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Evans et al. (2017) have pointed out how frequently and pervasively nonmedical prescription opioid use is associated with severe pain in young adults, especially young white males. This is a subset of such nonmedical users at tremendous risk of overdose (indeed 1/3 of the study respondents had an overdose event), especially given their concomitant use of benzodiazepines. Avoiding further contributing to the catastrophic rise in overdoses requires access to comprehensive pain care for these young adults. If they were to require opioid therapy, it would have to be in the context of a highly complex and expert variety of such care. If we fail to make it available, we will fail to address the root cause of overdoses for a sizeable subset of nonmedical prescription opioid users. In this lecture, the author will use the findings of the Evans study to jump off a discussion of the history of the opioid crisis and suggest enhancing and introducing the safe use of opioids in patients who need them.

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