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## New Report Addresses Major Problem with Opioid Pain Relievers

***Constipation, a troublesome side effect of opioid analgesics, can be prevented and should be considered whenever these agents are prescribed.***

Glenview, IL; August 2006 — Opioid medications (like hydrocodone, oxycodone, methadone, and others) often provide excellent relief from many painful conditions. However, the uncomfortable constipation that they may cause can worsen the suffering already present from pain.

Opioids produce a natural slowing of gastrointestinal motility, resulting in constipation in at least 4 out of 10 patients taking the medications. In some studies, nearly all patients prescribed opioid analgesics experienced constipation, defined as the passage of hard, dry stools less frequently than the patient's usual bowel-habit pattern. Opioid-induced constipation also may produce bloating, cramping, nausea, and vomiting, causing patients to reduce or stop taking the pain relief medications.

A new report from *Pain Treatment Topics* — “Managing Opioid-Induced Constipation in Ambulatory-Care Patients” — takes an evidence-based look at the problem and provides guidance for healthcare practitioners. The 9-page document is available for free download in PDF format at: [http://www.pain-topics.com/opioid\\_rx/index2.php#constipation](http://www.pain-topics.com/opioid_rx/index2.php#constipation).

According to *Pain Treatment Topics* Publisher/Editor, Stewart B. Leavitt, MA, PhD, and a coauthor of the report, “Prevention or management of existing constipation in patients prescribed opioid analgesics almost always requires laxatives, most commonly a combination stool softener

and stimulant. In most cases, the benefits of traditional advice, such as increasing intake of fluids and fiber, are actually unsupported by scientific evidence.”

“Also, many practitioners are unaware that taking bulk-forming laxatives, like those products containing methylcellulose or psyllium, can be harmful in patients prescribed opioids and should be avoided,” Leavitt continues. “The report discloses additional common beliefs about constipation and its treatment that are more myth than medical fact.”

*Pain Treatment Topics* — <http://www.Pain-Topics.com> — is an open-access website providing evidence-based clinical news, information, research, and education on the causes and effective treatment of the many types of pain conditions. It is currently funded by an unrestricted educational grant from Mallinckrodt Inc., St. Louis, MO, a leading manufacturer of generic opioid analgesic products.

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