

CODEINE DEPENDENCE

Results from a survey | Prepared for clinicians

The survey

450 individuals who recently had used codeine completed an online survey. Subjects answered questions about how much codeine they took, if they had problems with managing their use, and where they got codeine from. The study was conducted by researchers from King's College London and Waterford Institute of Technology.

Codeine dependence

About 20% of the subjects in the survey were dependent upon codeine.

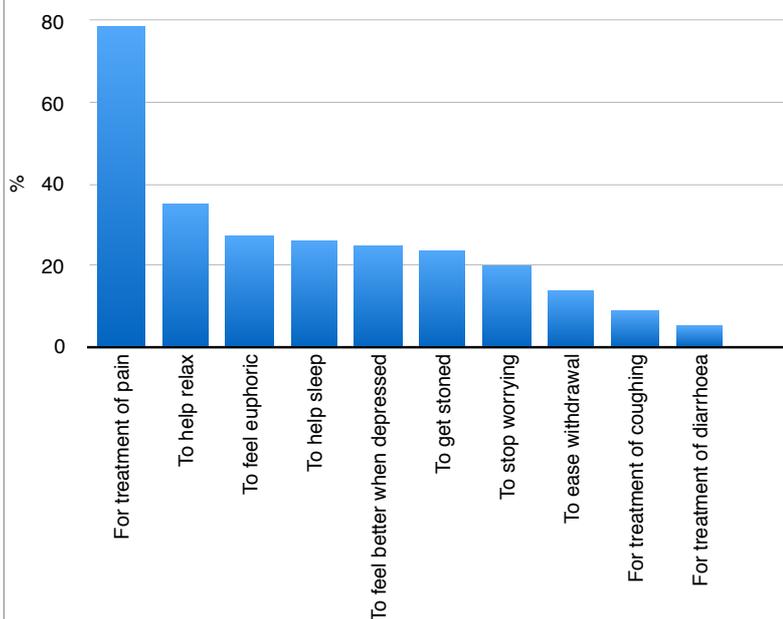
What can be done?

- Screening instruments can be used to assess dependence in patients
- Consider if a dose reduction scheme is required to help patients manage their use of codeine
- Patients taking combination tablets may be prescribed codeine phosphate to avoid adverse events from paracetamol or ibuprofen
- Opioid substitution treatment may be a necessary step toward recovery
- Report adverse events and dependence to the MHRA

Although codeine is not as potent as many other opioids, use of this drug can result in dependence, accompanied by long-term and excessive use. This factsheet characterises codeine dependent individuals.

What is known about patients who are codeine dependent?

Based on the results of a recent survey, psychological dependence upon codeine (cravings) was associated with physiological dependence, including tolerance and withdrawal symptoms. Patients who were codeine dependent took more codeine than those who were not and they also used codeine more frequently. Those who were dependent on codeine had difficulties in fulfilling their role obligations at work or at home. They also reported that they had experienced that others would express concern about their use of codeine.



Patients may take codeine for a variety of reasons.

Where do patients look for help to control their use of codeine?

In the survey, 7% had sought advice from their GP to help them control their use of codeine. 15% had sought similar advice on the Internet, whereas only 1% turned to pharmacists for such advice.