



2018 AG REQUEST LEGISLATION LIMITS ON INITIAL OPIOID PRESCRIPTIONS

PROBLEM

It is well documented that overprescription of opioids contributes to misuse, addiction, and overdose. Patients prescribed a one-month supply of opioids may only need to take the medication for a few days, so the remaining pills are then available for misuse.

This epidemic, which kills about two people in our state each day, shows no signs of abating with voluntary changes in prescriber behavior.

BACKGROUND

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, for most conditions, a three-day supply of opioids will often be sufficient; more than seven days will rarely be needed. Prescribing more than a week's supply of opioids approximately doubles the chance that a person will still be using opioids one year later. To prevent addiction, at least **15 states** have adopted statutes or agency rules limiting the amount of opioids practitioners may initially prescribe. Two of the country's largest pharmacy benefits managers also recently announced a seven-day limit for patients with acute conditions. Similarly, **our own state's Medicaid program also set limits on opioid prescriptions** – seven days for adults (21 years of age and older) and three days for youth (up to age 20).

LEGISLATION (SB 6050 / HB 2272)

To prevent unnecessary exposure to highly addictive opioids, this legislation limits the amount of **first-time** opioid prescriptions for outpatient use. Consistent with Washington's Medicaid policy, opioid prescriptions will be limited to a seven-day supply for patients at least 21 years old and a three-day supply for patients under 21 years old.

The limits do **not** apply to the treatment of pain associated with cancer, or for palliative, hospice, or other types of end-of-life care. People who are already using opioids chronically for other conditions are also not affected, since the limits apply to initial prescriptions.

Practitioners retain discretion. If, in the professional medical judgment of a practitioner, greater quantities of opioids are required to treat a patient's medical condition, these prescriptions may be issued if practitioners document the condition in the patient's medical record and indicate that an alternative to opioids was not appropriate.

This legislation also requires patients to acknowledge that they have been informed about the dangers of opioids upon an initial prescription of more than three days.



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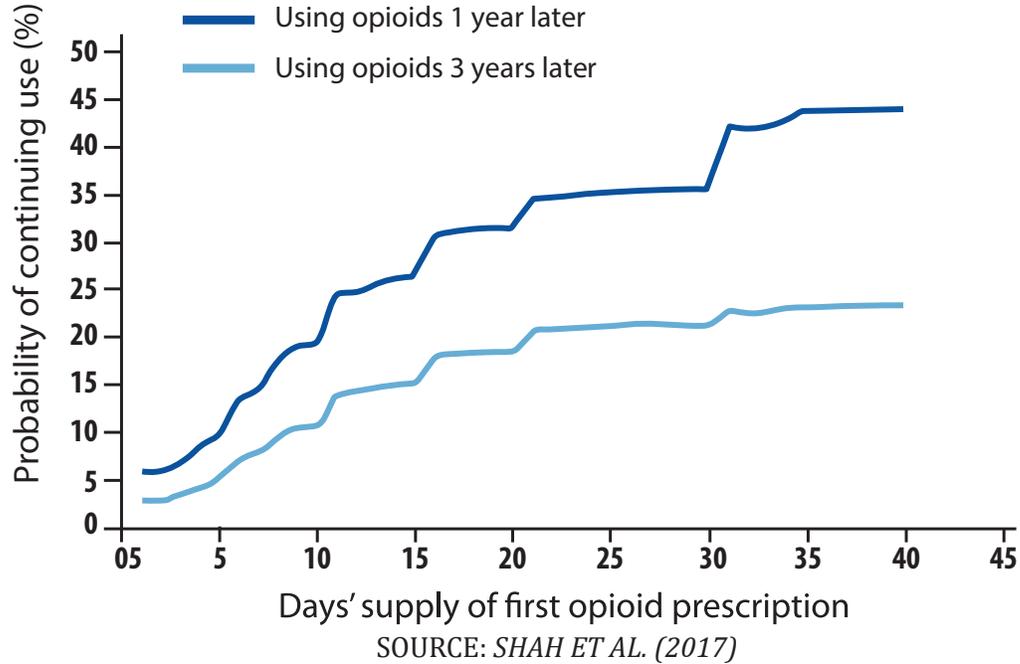
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Risk of prolonged opioid use increases with each day of prescription after *just 3 days*



States are Increasingly Establishing Limits on Opioid Prescriptions

