

NIH Research for the Entwined Opioid and Chronic Pain Crises

- ***Pain is the single most costly US health problem, by far.***
 - **Pain costs \$560 to \$635 billion per year in the US ².**
 - ...vs. 3.5% of the US GDP (\$631 billion in 2015).
 - ...vs. combined US costs of heart disease plus cancer (\$552 billion per year ²)
 - ...vs. combined revenues of Exxon-Mobil, Apple, and General Motors (\$632 billion in 2016).
 - Back/neck pain and headache disorders are the 1st and 4th leading causes of US disability ³.
- ***28.7% of Americans have chronic pain ¹, a complex, poorly understood disease.***
 - Chronic pain has physiological and psychosocial dimensions with multiple types.
 - There may be no apparent injury or sustained cause for chronic pain.
- ***Ineffective pain therapies are a principal cause of the opioid epidemic.***
 - Opioid prescription drugs (hereafter “opioids”) are the default treatments for chronic pain.
 - US consumes 80% of the world’s opioids ⁴, enough for each adult to have a month’s supply annually ⁵.
 - Effects of opioids on chronic pain are poorly defined and unpredictable ⁶; patients may benefit or worsen.
 - Among chronic pain patients taking opioids, ~25% eventually misuse them and ~10% become addicted ⁷.
 - 91 Americans died daily of opioid or heroin overdose in 2015 ⁸.
 - **Safe, effective, and affordable chronic pain therapies are urgently needed to replace opioids.**
- ***For effective therapies, NIH research must meet the societal burden of pain.***
 - **Development of transformative therapies often relies on NIH funded research discoveries ⁹.**
 - NIH funded only \$463 million in pain research in 2015 ¹. Relative to their economic impacts, NIH funded...
 - 5 times more research on heart disease, 6.5 times more on diabetes, and 26 times more on cancer ^{1,2}.
 - NIH pain research is guided by the Interagency Pain Research Coordinating Committee and the consensus Federal Pain Research Strategy (forthcoming).
- ***Safe & effective therapies from successful NIH pain research could significantly reduce pain, opioid abuse, and the national deficit.***
 - **If new therapies reduced US pain costs by just 1%, it could save \$6 billion annually.**
 - Development and adoption of novel, safe, effective, and affordable chronic pain therapies would:
 - ...reduce pain suffering and disability.
 - ...reduce opioid over-prescribing, misuse, diversion, addiction, overdose, and criminal justice costs.
 - ...stimulate the economy with new jobs, higher productivity, & products with huge global markets.
 - The US government is “ultimately on the hook for the costs of illness” (- Newt Gingrich ¹⁰).

Support working group efforts on a bill to fully fund CARA [Sec.108] provisions to prioritize NIH pain research

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