

Black patients more likely to be monitored for prescription drug abuse

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(Medical Xpress) -- Despite studies that show that whites are more likely than blacks to misuse prescription pain medications, a new study reveals that blacks are significantly more likely than whites to be checked for potential drug abuse. The study appears in *Annals of Family Medicine*.

The research team studied three risk-reduction strategies in black and white patients who were prescribed opioid painkillers: urine testing, regular office visits and restricted early drug refills.

Of the more than 1,600 patients studied, black patients were significantly more likely than white patients to be scheduled for regular office visits and have restricted early prescription refills. Though black patients were also more likely to receive urine tests, the percentage was

not considered significant after adjustment for other demographic and clinical factors.

According to lead author William Becker, M.D., instructor in [general internal medicine](#) at Yale School of Medicine, "These data raise troubling questions about lax monitoring, especially for white patients taking opioids for a long period of time. In addition to drug misuse, there should be frequent monitoring for efficacy, side effects and major adverse events like accidental overdose."

Previous studies have shown [racial disparities](#) in prescribing opioids for pain. Physicians are less likely to prescribe them for black patients than white patients, even though white patients are more likely than blacks to misuse these [opioids](#). "These disparities may reflect a lack of [physician training](#) in managing pain among minorities," Becker said, "leading them to rely on stereotypes in making their decisions."

"Standardized monitoring procedures that are a routine part of comprehensive pain care show the most promise for eliminating these disparities," Becker said.

Provided by Yale University

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