

# Alzheimer's patients' use of painkilling patches cause for concern

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benzodiazepines was common. They said the finding is cause for concern because both medicines cause drowsiness.

Benzodiazepines are used to relieve anxiety, relax muscles and prevent seizures; they include Valium and Xanax.

The researchers, led by Aleksi Hamina, a [doctoral student](#) in the university's School of Pharmacy, stressed that long-term opioid use is problematic when dealing with non-cancer pain. Evidence of its benefits is limited, and the risk of adverse effects is increased compared to short-term treatments, they said in a university news release.

Changing doses and discontinuing use of opioid patches requires more careful monitoring, so use of these [patches](#) should be assessed regularly in people with dementia, the [researchers](#) said.

(HealthDay)—Long-term use of powerful opioid painkillers may be common among Alzheimer's disease patients and could be a cause for concern, researchers report.

Researchers analyzed data from more than 67,000 Alzheimer's disease patients in Finland. They found that 7 percent had used opioids for more than six months for non-cancer pain relief.

One-third of patients who began using opioids became long-term users, and researchers found a strong link between opioid skin patches and long-term use.

While rates of long-term opioid use was about the same as in the general population, long-term use of skin patches was twice as common among Alzheimer's [patients](#), the study showed. People in the [general population](#) more often took pills.

The University of Eastern Finland researchers also found that long-term opioid use together with

The study was published online recently in the journal *Pain*.

**More information:** The U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse has more on [opioids](#).

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