

# Study examines polyneuropathy and long-term opioid use

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Polyneuropathy is a common painful condition, especially among older patients, which can result in functional impairment.

In a new article published by *JAMA Neurology*, Christopher J. Klein, M.D., and his colleagues at the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minn., examined the association of long-term opioid therapy with functional status, adverse outcomes and death among [patients](#) with polyneuropathy. The population-based study included data from 1,993 patients with polyneuropathy who were receiving opioid therapy and a group of control patients for comparison.

Polyneuropathy was associated with an increased likelihood of long-term opioid therapy of 90 days or more.

Those patients receiving long-term opioid therapy also were more likely to be diagnosed with depression, [opioid dependence](#) or [opioid overdose](#). Self-reported functional status measures were either unimproved or poorer among those patients receiving long-term opioid therapy, according to the results.

Limitations of the study include that it was based on prescription data without confirmation that prescriptions were filled and taken as intended.

"Polyneuropathy increased the likelihood of long-term opioid therapy. Chronic pain itself cannot be ruled out as a source of worsened functional status among patients receiving long-term opioid therapy. However, long-term opioid therapy did not improve functional status but rather was associated with a higher risk of subsequent opioid dependency and overdose," the article concludes.

**More information:** *JAMA Neurology* (2017).  
[jamanetwork.com/journals/jaman ... jamaneurol.2017.0486](http://jamanetwork.com/journals/jaman...jamaneurol.2017.0486)

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