

Gabapentin co-use may increase risk of fatal opioid overdose

3 October 2017

Co-prescription of the anticonvulsant gabapentin is associated with an increased risk of opioid-related death in people who are prescribed opioid painkillers, according to a new study published in *PLOS Medicine*.

Gabapentin is often used together with opioids to treat chronic pain, but both drugs have been shown to suppress breathing, a potentially deadly side-effect. Additionally, [gabapentin](#) use may also increase the amount of opioid absorbed by the body, effectively increasing the opioid dose.

In a case-control study among people who were prescribed [opioid analgesics](#) in Ontario, Canada, Dr. Tara Gomes of the University of Toronto, Canada, and colleagues, compared 1,256 [opioid users](#) who died of an opioid-related cause (cases) with 4,619 matched controls who also used opioids, but did not die of an opioid-related cause during the study period. Overall, 12.3% of cases (155 of 1,256) and 6.8% of controls (313 of 4,619) were prescribed gabapentin in the prior 120 days. After adjusting for additional risk factors, the authors found that the combination of gabapentin and opioid exposure was associated with a 49% higher risk of dying from an [opioid overdose](#) than opioid use alone (adjusted odds ratio 1.49; 95% confidence interval 1.18 to 1.88, p

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