

Use of pain drug Lyrica common among injecting drug users, study finds

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The use of pregabalin, a medicine for neuropathic pain, is relatively common among a sample of people who regularly inject drugs (PWID) in Australia, a new study by researchers at the National Drug and Alcohol Research Center (NDARC), UNSW Sydney has found.

In a sample of 905 participants from the 2018 [Illicit Drug Reporting System](#), it was identified that 25 percent of PWID reported using [pregabalin](#) in the previous six months.

Lead author, Dr. Rachel Sutherland said, "Ten percent of the sample reported using pregabalin that was prescribed to them, while 15 percent reported using pregabalin that was not prescribed to them."

She added, "Those using prescribed pregabalin reported daily use, whilst those using non-prescribed pregabalin reported infrequent use (i.e. less than once a month)."

Recent use of prescribed benzodiazepines and non-prescribed pharmaceutical opioids was

associated with both prescribed and non-prescribed pregabalin use.

This is concerning in light of a recent study in Canada that found concomitant use of pregabalin and opioids almost doubled the odds of opioid-related death.

"It is therefore important that consumers are made aware of the potential risks of combining opioids and pregabalin or other central nervous system depressants."

In this study, recent use of non-prescribed benzodiazepines and illicit stimulants were significantly associated with non-prescribed pregabalin use, as was past-year non-fatal overdose for any substance.

"It is possible that people reporting non-prescribed pregabalin use are engaging in riskier patterns of substance use, which may put them at greater overdose risk," said Dr. Sutherland.

She said, "It is important to note that these findings are from a sentinel [sample](#) of PWID, and do not represent all people who inject drugs. However, our findings suggest that education campaigns targeting both [health professionals](#) and consumers regarding the risks of harm associated with concomitant use of pregabalin and other central nervous system depressants are warranted."

More information: Rachel Sutherland et al. Patterns and correlates of prescribed and non-prescribed pregabalin use among a sample of people who inject drugs in Australia, *Drug and Alcohol Review* (2020). DOI: [10.1111/dar.13083](https://doi.org/10.1111/dar.13083)

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