

**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00:01 22 SEPTEMBER 2015**

## **OPIOID PAINKILLER DEPENDENCE AFFECTS AS MANY AS ONE IN TEN BRITISH ADULTS**

*Launch of inaugural Opioid Painkiller Addiction Awareness Day highlights need for patient identification and treatment service provision*

**LONDON, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2015** — New survey data released today timed to coincide with the launch of Opioid Painkiller Addiction Awareness Day (OPAAD), estimates that nearly one in ten survey respondents believe they could be or could have been addicted to opioid painkillers.<sup>i</sup> In fact, approximately one in six UK adults surveyed are concerned about the amount of opioid painkillers they take on a continuous basis and feel they have put themselves at risk of addiction, with a quarter taking opioid painkillers for more than five years.<sup>i</sup> The implications of these results, which suggest that Opioid Painkiller Dependence (OPD) may be a greater problem than previously understood,<sup>ii</sup> are compounded by the fact that nearly a third of those who recognise their addiction opt not to seek medical advice or treatment.<sup>i</sup>

Dr Yasir Abbasi, Clinical Director for Addictions Services at Mersey Care NHS Trust commented, *“Opioid painkiller dependence can affect anyone at any time and today’s results gives us some estimation of how prevalent the condition could be, something which we know exists but do not have definitive numbers of individuals affected, instead relying on our clinical experience to estimate the potential scale of the problem. More worrying still is that although many people seem to recognise that they have a problem, not everyone feels able to access the treatment they need. If left untreated, it can have a personal and societal impact. It is imperative that this imbalance is addressed if we are to avoid a far greater number of people becoming affected in the coming years.”*

OPD can occur with both prescription and over the counter (OTC) opioid painkillers with estimates showing that over nine million people in the UK are likely to have an opioid prescription<sup>ii</sup> and rates of prescribing doubling between 2003 and 2013.<sup>iii</sup> OPD is a long-term medical condition that places a significant burden on the individual and their family and can negatively impact psychological wellbeing, employment and relationships.<sup>iv,v</sup> When left untreated, it can increase the risk of various physical and mental health conditions<sup>vi</sup> in addition to increasing the risk of death.<sup>vii</sup> Current figures estimate that over 192,000<sup>ii</sup> people may be addicted to prescription opioid painkillers alone in the UK (not including OTC).

While two thirds of those surveyed confirmed they recognised that treatment is available for OPD, nearly a third (30.7%) opted not to seek medical advice or treatment as they believed they didn’t need it.<sup>i</sup> Additionally, 13.9%

didn't seek treatment because they didn't know where to access it with 12.4% noting they were too ashamed to admit their addiction to seek help.<sup>i</sup>

Joe Kean, Bridge Project Team Manager at the Unity Recovery Centre, Bradford commented, *"There are many reasons why someone may not seek the treatment they need and deserve. I meet a lot of people who feel they would rather keep their condition a secret than compare their symptoms with someone who is dealing with an illegal heroin addiction. Stigma is a big barrier to treatment and more should be done to design and adapt services to better fit the needs of this population and then to encourage those in this group, who are often just as at risk but often overlooked, to access the services that can support them."*

Other findings from the OPAAD survey highlight the under-recognised danger of prescription opioid painkillers, with only 6% of UK adults ranking them as having the most serious effect on society and healthcare systems versus 58% for illegal drugs.<sup>i</sup> However, data released by the office for National Statistics show that the number of times an opioid medication was mentioned on a death certificate has risen by 40% over the last three years (2012-2014). In 2014 the number of times an opioid medication was mentioned on a death certificate (809) was greater than the number of times cocaine, cannabis, amphetamines, and new psychoactive substances (i.e. legal highs) were mentioned on a death certificate combined (496),<sup>vii</sup> yet the latter receive much more focus from the media and the government.

The OPAAD Survey was commissioned by Indivior UK Limited. Indivior is a specialised pharmaceutical company focused on the needs of addiction patients globally.

For more information on opioid painkiller addiction or to seek help, please visit [www.turntohelp.co.uk](http://www.turntohelp.co.uk).

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**Notes to Editors**

**The Opioid Painkiller Addiction Awareness Survey**

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The Opioid Painkiller Addiction Awareness Day (OPAAD) Survey was organised by Tonic Life Communications on behalf of Indivior UK Limited in September 2015. The survey was of 1,461 UK adults. The objective of the survey was to gauge levels of knowledge around opioid painkillers and the addiction risk associated to them and discover what proportion of people surveyed were affected or had sought treatment.

### **About Indivior**

Indivior is a global specialty pharmaceutical company with a 20-year legacy of leadership in patient advocacy, health policy and evidence-based best practice models that have revolutionised modern addiction treatment. The name is the fusion of the words individual and endeavour, and the tagline “Focus on you” makes the company’s commitment clear. Indivior is dedicated to transforming addiction from a global human crisis to a recognised and treated chronic disease. Indivior has a strong pipeline of product candidates designed to both expand on its heritage within the field of opioid dependence and address other chronic diseases of addiction – including opiate overdose, alcohol use disorders and cocaine intoxication. It also is pursuing novel product candidates in related mental health disorders such as schizophrenia. Headquartered in the United States in Richmond, Va., Indivior employs more than 700 individuals globally and its portfolio is available in over 40 countries worldwide. Visit [www.Indivior.com](http://www.Indivior.com) to learn more.

### **References**

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<sup>i</sup> Data on file: IND-UK-0001.

<sup>ii</sup> Alho, H. and Strydom, M. (2013). “Prevalence of prescription opioid-dependency in Europe and risk factors for abuse.” Presented at the International Society of Addiction Medicine Annual Meeting 2013. Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 21–23 November 2013

<sup>iii</sup> Health and Social Care Information Centre. Prescription Cost analysis: NSAIDs and Analgesics National Charts 2003-2013.

<sup>iv</sup> Patient.info. Opioid Abuse and Dependence. 2012: <http://patient.info/doctor/Opioid-Abuse-and-Dependence.htm> (last accessed September 2015)

<sup>v</sup> Ruetsch, C. Empirical view of opioid dependence. *J Manag Care Pharm.* 2010;16(1-b):S9-S13.

<sup>vi</sup> Fischer, B. and Argento, E. (2012). “Prescription opioid related misuse, harms, diversion and interventions in Canada: a review.” *Pain Physician* 15(3 Suppl): ES191–203

<sup>vii</sup> Office for National Statistics. Deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales, 2014 registrations: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/subnational-health3/deaths-related-to-drug-poisoning/england-and-wales---2014/deaths-related-to-drug-poisoning-in-england-and-wales--2014-registrations.html> (last accessed September 2015)