

British Pain Society response to Government intention to place warnings on opioid medication packages

The British Pain Society (BPS) welcomes the recent proposal from the Government to add warnings on packages of medicines containing opioids, about the risk of harm including addiction.

It is pleased to contribute as a stakeholder to the current review of opioid medicines, conducted by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, on the advice from the Expert Working Group of the Commission on Human Medicines.

The Society sees this as a positive move towards implementing a range of actions directed to improve the information and education of the public and also healthcare professionals, on the limitations and potential harms from prolonged use of opioid-containing medicines.

The BPS is concerned that care is taken over the terminology around dependence and addiction with respect to opioids, in order to avoid stigmatising people using these drugs responsibly. It also feels that the MHRA should consider reviewing the packaging of other medicines prescribed for pain but with the potential for harm, such as gabapentin/pregabalin.

The Society is aware that improvements in cancer survival mean that some patients living with and beyond cancer may also be at risk of long-term opioid and other pain medicine usage, and consideration should be given to information and education for this population too.

The Society believes there should be a broad programme of education and research on how the public and healthcare professionals absorb and use such information. This should ideally be 'joined up' across relevant organisations and disciplines such as the Royal College of Anaesthetists, the Royal College of General Practitioners and the Royal College of Nursing, and should include the resources already available, such as "e-PAIN" and "Opioids Aware".

Further statements from BPS on the use and potential harms of medicines prescribed for pain relief can be found here –

[BPS statement on recent evidence of increasing access to, and episodes of poisoning from prescription opioids.](#)

END