

ORO Talking Points

The way New Jerseyans are being treated for pain in the emergency department is changing, and the gold-standard of care is assessing patients for opportunities to use appropriate alternatives to opioids.

The **Opioid Reduction Options (ORO) in the Emergency Department (ED)** programs helps emergency doctors, nurses, pharmacists and care team members treat people's pain while reducing the risk of opioid addiction.

How does it work? When a patient comes into the ED in pain, medical teams use a patient's health history and specific complaint to identify the most appropriate course of pain management. They use a series of decisions (called an algorithm) to find the most effective pain management technique or drug with the fewest side effects.

A patient's pain is a serious part of care and will be addressed, but patients should not be surprised when opioids are not the first option for treatment. There are a very small number of exceptions where opioids are considered the best form of pain management, including patients with cancer and end-of-life care needs, and these patients will be treated appropriately.

Hospitals in the ORO program are not opioid-free – opioids will be prescribed when they are the appropriate course of treatment.

What are some of the options?

- Tylenol and Ibuprofen combinations
- Topical pain relief, in the form of a patch or a cream
- Nitrous oxide, otherwise known as laughing gas
- “Local” pain relievers, targeted at a specific painful place on the body
- Counseling, massage, meditation and/or yoga for chronic pain.

Why are these changes being made? The opioid epidemic claimed 351,630 lives between 1999 and 2016, starting with the initial spike in synthetic opioid prescriptions when opioid pain relievers were incorrectly marketed to doctors and patients as nonaddictive. There is evidence that many people who became addicted – and overdosed – on opioid drugs started with use of a prescription medication. The first rule of medicine is “Do No Harm”; by reducing patient risk of addiction hospital EDs are following that rule.

What can you do to avoid unnecessary opioid prescriptions? Talk to your doctor or nurse about your pain concerns and ask if you are a candidate for an alternative pain management option. Be open to working with your healthcare team to find the best possible solutions for you.

ORO in the ED is an education program for New Jersey hospitals funded by a \$1 million commitment from the New Jersey Department of Human Services and the New Jersey Department of Health to promote nonopioid, evidence-based options for pain management. ORO is facilitated through the New Jersey Hospital Association in partnership with faculty from St. Joseph's Health.