

# Investigation of the Japanese Availability of the Opioid Analgesic Risk Assessment Tools Used in the United States

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## Summary

In Japan, prescription of opioid analgesics for cancer pain has not been considered problematic. Since 2010, controlled-release formulations of strong opioid analgesics have also been indicated for noncancerous chronic pain. Although multiple treatment options are available to patients with chronic pain, increasing number of prescriptions are being written by physicians with little experience of prescribing opioids for long-term treatment of chronic pain. Concerns have been raised that this could result in dependence. Consequently, various conditions, including education of prescribing physicians, have been mandated by government authorities in connection with the approval of strong opioid analgesics for chronic pain. However, it is difficult even for psychiatrists to determine the risk of dependence, and much more so for orthopedists.

We believe that a self-check tool that allows patients to provide information indicating their abuse or dependence risk would assist physicians to identify patients suited for opioid analgesics treatment. Therefore, we explored the possibility of developing a tool for Japanese patients, referring to the tools employed in the Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies (REMS) program mandated in the United States. We examined risk factors based on the relevant guidelines and survey results published in Japan and overseas. The prescription pharmaceutical abuse situation in Japan is completely different from that in the United States. Considering the Japanese situation, it is suggested that a specifically designed Japanese tool is needed to identify patients with psychosocial factors contributing to their pain and to identify patients with concurrent psychiatric illnesses, rather than surveying patients' past abuse history.

## Key words

Opioid analgesic, Non-cancer Pain, Risk management, Abuse, Dependence, Misuse, Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies (REMS), Assessment Tool