The past 50 years have seen a growing epidemic of opioid addiction and abuse emerge in the United States; in 2015 alone, opioid medications, both legal and illegal, caused over 30,000 fatalities, triple the number of overdoses reported the entire 15 years prior.¹

Both opioids and the current epidemic have long been a focus of scientific research; with Scopus® data from 2011–2016, we used SciVal to analyze scholarly output, research impact, trending topics, and top researchers on both topics.

Research Referencing Opioids (1950-2015)

Worldwide, research referencing opioids in any context increased by a factor of 54 between 1950 and 2015²

Research output referencing opioids, 1950-2015

Top Journals

Based on number of publications referencing opioids

Anesthesia & Analgesia
4,242 publications

European Journal of Pharmacology
3,348 publications

Anesthesiology Journal
2,983 publications

British Journal of Anaesthesia
2,970 publications

Journal of Pharmacology & Experimental Therapeutics
2,962 publications

All data taken from SciVal or Scopus on May 31, 2017. Scopus® data from January 1, 1950 to December 31, 2016 and includes all publication types (articles, papers, surveys, reviews, editorials, etc.) where search terms were mentioned in the title, abstract, or keywords.

About SciVal
SciVal offers quick, easy access to the research performance of 8,500 research institutions and 220 countries worldwide. For more information, visit sci-val.com.

About Scopus
Scopus® is the world’s leading abstract and citation database, and is used by institutions, governments, as well as for university rankings around the world. For more information, visit scopus.com.
The Opioid Epidemic in America
The Research Behind Understanding, Preventing and Treating Addiction

Opioid Misuse & Addiction in the United States

Data from the U.S. National Institute on Drug Abuse indicates:

- Roughly 21-29% of patients prescribed opioids for chronic pain misuse them
- Between 8-12% develop an opioid use disorder
- An estimated 4-6% who misuse prescription opioids transition to heroin
- Approximately 80% of people who use heroin first misused prescription opioids

Research Referencing Opioid Addiction (1950-2016)

Scholarly output focused on opioid addiction represents a fraction of all research referencing opioids, with a particularly noticeable spike between 1969 and 1974:

- Percentage of all opioid-referencing research focused on addiction, 1950-2016

Research focused on treatment and prevention of opioid addiction show frequently occurring keyphrases include: pain management, opioid antagonists (such as naloxone), prescription drug misuse, and opioid substitution treatment. SciVal’s word cloud previews the growing (orange) and declining (blue) keywords and phrases found in this research area.


2) Search performed in Scopus using the following terms: "opioid, opiate, fentanyl, hydrocodone, oxycodone, oxymorphone, propoxyphene, hydromorphone, meperidine, morphine, or codeine"


4) Search performed in Scopus using the following terms: "opioid, opiate, fentanyl, hydrocodone, oxycodone, oxymorphone, propoxyphene, hydromorphone, meperidine, morphine, codeine, or heroin", AND "addiction, 'use disorder', misuse, or overdose"