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The CDC, by issuing the 2016 and 2022 Opioid Prescribing Guidelines, has played a major role in the destruction of US pain medicine and the ongoing suffering of both chronic and acute pain patients. These guidelines have resulted in widespread untreated and undertreated pain, worsened outcomes, psychological distress, overdose through substitution of illegal drugs, and suicidal ideation/behavior while NOT having the intended effect of reducing addiction rates or fatal drug overdoses. It will literally require years to correct the mess that CDC has made by adhering to an ineffective and largely political agenda, to the exclusion of well-established science. An entire generation of medical practitioners hesitate to prescribe (or, in the case of pharmacists, fill) adequate levels of opioid medication in fear of losing their licenses and criminal prosecution.

Nearly all states have designed and implemented new laws, regulations, and policies based on the CDC recommendations with the laudable goal of decreasing the rate of opioid overdose. Many states' Medicaid programs, insurers, pharmacy benefit managers, and pharmacies also used the CDC guidelines to create opioid prescribing limits. After studies and further research demonstrated that legally prescribed opioid medication was not the driving force behind this so-called epidemic and that the chances of developing an addiction after an initial legal prescription are less than one percent, the CDC, and therefore all entities noted above, continued enforcing limitations on prescription opioids at the expense of pain patients everywhere.

Millions of patients have been dropped due to their clinicians' fear of sanctions or persecution by State Medical Boards, insurance companies, or law enforcement on fallacious grounds derived from the CDC guidelines. This remains true although the CDC published warnings against misuse of the guidelines. An example is the popular seven-day restriction of opioid medication post-surgery, even though studies have shown that chronic pain is much more likely to develop if acute pain is not adequately treated (and every patient is different!). These ripple effects extend out to the supply chain as well – shortages of commonly used opioid medications have been reported nationwide.

In summation, the CDC guidelines are scientifically inaccurate, ineffective, injurious, and should be completely rescinded. They did not include input from pain management physicians or patients, but rather were written by addiction specialists using cherry-picked data to push their own agenda working with those who wanted to appear to be mitigating the overdose crisis, whether or not the strategies actually worked.