

Publications about The US Regulations and Laws Governing Pain Management and Opioid Use in the Anesthesiology and Pain Journals

Amira Elmansoury B.S., Eman Nada M.D., Ph.D.,
University of Massachusetts - School of Public Health,
Department of Anesthesiology, Stony Brook University

BACKGROUND

- The U.S. opioid epidemic has claimed over 500,000 lives. This crisis led to significant changes in pain management laws and regulations.
- Anesthesiologists regularly manage pain and rely on professional journals for updates. Despite their key role, there's limited coverage of opioid policies in anesthesiology and pain journals.
- This study reviews how often such topics appear in these journals over the past 15 years.

METHODS

- Search period: January 1, 2010 – January 1, 2025
- Database: PubMed
- Search terms:
 - Opioid Stewardship
 - Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP)
 - Pain management and opioid policies and regulation
- Inclusion criteria:
 - Articles published in Anesthesiology and Pain journals
 - U.S.-based regulatory and policy-focused studies



There’s a limited number of articles in Anesthesiology & Pain journals about opioid laws and pain management policies—despite major legal changes and the ongoing opioid crisis

Keywords	All Articles (n)	Anesthesia & Pain Journals (n)	Percentage
Opioid Stewardship	97	5	5.2%
The Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP)	187	10	5.3%
Pain Management and Opioid Policies and Regulations	80	12	15%

Table 1; Results of searching PubMed for keywords related to pain management policies and regulations



RESULTS:

- Data analyzed: Number of relevant articles published in Anesthesiology and Pain journals per keyword category
- Please see Table one
- Key takeaway: **Very few policy-focused articles appear in anesthesiology and pain journals compared to the overall literature.**

DISCUSSION

- Anesthesiologists play a critical role in pain management but are not widely exposed to evolving opioid policies through their specialty journals.
- Regulatory changes—such as CDC guidelines, PDMPs, and legislation like the NOPAIN Act—are underrepresented in the literature they rely on.
- This lack of policy content creates a knowledge gap that may impact clinical practice and patient safety.
- Standardizing and increasing policy education in anesthesiology publications is essential for bridging this gap.
- Greater journal coverage of opioid laws can help ensure providers stay informed, compliant, and aligned with best practices.

REFERENCES:

Food and Drug Administration. Letter to application holders: ER/LA opioid analgesic class labeling changes and postmarket requirements. Silver Spring, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services, (2014) .

B leicher J et al. . Postoperative opioid prescribing, use and pain trends following general surgery procedures: a retrospective cohort study among veterans comparing non-opioid versus chronic opioid users. Reg Anesth Pain Med. 2022 May 6:rapm-2021-103382. .