

State legal restrictions and prescription-opioid use among disabled adults.

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Meara E, Horwitz JR, Powell W, et al. State Legal Restrictions and Prescription-Opioid Use among Disabled Adults. N Engl J Med. 2016;375(1):44-53. doi:10.1056/NEJMsa1514387.

<https://psnet.ahrq.gov/issue/state-legal-restrictions-and-prescription-opioid-use-among-disabled-adults>

Growing rates of [opioid misuse](#) endanger public health. The impact of legal restrictions to limit high-risk prescribing and resultant adverse events is unclear. One [recent study](#) found that opioid-related adverse events were effectively reduced in states with stringent prescription drug monitoring programs compared to states without such regulations. However, this study examined data regarding Medicare beneficiaries with disabilities before and after adoption of controlled-substance laws and found no significant decrease in rates of nonfatal overdose, high opioid doses, or receipt of opioids from four or more prescribers. These results suggest that current regulatory policy may not be sufficient to address [high-risk prescribing practices](#) among Medicare beneficiaries with disabilities. More work is needed to develop effective strategies to treat chronic pain safely in this high-risk population. A [WebM&M commentary](#) described risks related to prescribing opioids for patients with chronic pain.