

## New Research: Opioid Addiction and Dependence After Surgery is Significantly Higher than Previously Known

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*Vast Majority of Surgeons Feel Pressure to Prescribe More Opioids than Patients Need*

*Professional Athlete Gabrielle Reece Joins Campaign to Promote Discussions Before Surgery about Non-Opioid Options for Pain Control*

PARSIPPANY, N.J., Aug. 01, 2016 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- As the opioid epidemic rages on in the U.S., a new study finds that the use of opioids to treat pain after surgery is leading to addiction at alarming rates. According to a national survey, one in ten patients admit they've become addicted to or dependent on opioids after being exposed to these powerful medications following an operation. With 70 million surgical patients in the U.S. receiving an opioid annually, these findings suggest that as many as 7 million patients could develop an opioid addiction or dependency this year after surgery.

The rates of postsurgical opioid addiction and dependence are even higher for certain populations polled. Among younger people ages 18-29, the incidence is 15 percent\*; for those living in the western region of the U.S., it soars to 18 percent.\*

This research sheds new light on the causes of opioid addiction, which until now has primarily been focused on the use of opioids for treating patients with chronic pain. These findings indicate that even prescribing these drugs for short-term postsurgical pain can put patients at serious risk.

The survey polled 500 adults in the U.S. who had an orthopedic or soft tissue surgery in the past 12 months and 200 U.S. surgeons who perform these procedures. It was conducted by Wakefield Research on behalf of Pacira Pharmaceuticals, Inc.

"Although potent pain relievers, opioids have long been associated with a range of unwanted and potentially severe side effects that can delay the patient recovery process including nausea, vomiting, constipation, and even respiratory depression. Now, these findings shine a significant spotlight on the role their use after surgery can play in contributing to our nation's tragic opioid epidemic—a factor that, to date, has not been a major focus of attention," said T.J. Gan, M.D., an anesthesiologist and President of the American Society of Enhanced Recovery (ASER). "Fortunately, there are several effective non-opioid options that are available for use before, during, and after surgery that help reduce patients' need for opioids, thus limiting their risk for debilitating opioid-related side effects, or in the worst scenarios—addiction or dependence."

### **Despite Risks, Pressure to Prescribe Opioids Remains High**

According to the national survey, almost all surgeons polled (94 percent) say they frequently prescribe opioids to manage postsurgical pain. Alarming, 91 percent indicated they frequently feel pressure to prescribe more opioids than their patients actually need.

As part of the Affordable Care Act, performance scores on publicly reported patient satisfaction surveys, including questions on how well a patient's pain is controlled, are used to determine a portion of



Gabrielle Reece



a hospital's reimbursement from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). Numerous medical experts and organizations have called for CMS to remove those pain-related questions, arguing it unintentionally encourages the overprescribing of opioids to obtain high scores on the pain management section of the survey.



"There's no doubt that doctors are often caught in the middle of policy and patient demands that can place undue burden on their prescribing habits," continued Dr. Gan. "Now, more than ever, it's critical to better educate hospitals, clinicians and, most importantly, patients about effective non-opioid options so all of us have the knowledge needed to choose alternatives to minimize or avoid opioids whenever appropriate in the hospital setting."

#### **Choices Matter Launched to Foster Surgeon-Patient Dialogue**

The overwhelming majority of patients surveyed were highly aware of the risks associated with opioids; nearly 90 percent were concerned about side effects, addiction, or dependence and 79 percent would prefer a non-opioid pain management option. However, less than a quarter of patients say they discussed non-opioid options with their clinicians prior to surgery.

Given the clear need to cultivate better communication between patients and surgeons regarding all available postsurgical pain treatments, Pacira Pharmaceuticals and ASER are launching the *Choices Matter* program. The initiative aims to educate both patients and physicians about their options when it comes to postsurgical pain control in order to promote proactive discussions before surgery about non-opioid alternatives. Former star volleyball player, Gabrielle Reece, whose recent knee replacement surgery has made this issue personal, is joining the campaign.

"I knew pain would be a natural part of the recovery process following my knee replacement operation. Even before my surgery, I made a personal decision to not rely too heavily on opioids to manage my symptoms," said Ms. Reece. "It's great to know that non-opioid options exist and that strong prescription painkillers aren't the only way to manage pain after surgery. Ultimately we're the number one cheerleaders for our health so asking questions is key. The more information we have about our options, the better we can collaborate with our doctors on a personalized plan that gets us back on our feet again as quickly and safely as possible after surgery."

For more information about postsurgical pain management options, including a customizable guide to facilitate a surgeon-patient discussion, visit [www.PlanAgainstPain.com](http://www.PlanAgainstPain.com).

#### **About Pacira**

Pacira Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (NASDAQ:PCRX) is a specialty pharmaceutical company focused on the clinical and commercial development of new products that meet the needs of acute care practitioners and their patients. The company's flagship product, EXPAREL® (bupivacaine liposome injectable suspension), a non-opioid local analgesic for postsurgical pain control, was commercially launched in the United States in April 2012. EXPAREL and two other products have successfully utilized DepoFoam®, a unique and proprietary product delivery technology that encapsulates drugs without altering their molecular structure, and releases them over a desired period of time. Additional information about Pacira is available at [www.pacira.com](http://www.pacira.com).

#### **About the American Society for Enhanced Recovery**

The American Society for Enhanced Recovery is a nonprofit organization with an international membership, and is dedicated to promoting the practice of optimizing patient preparation and recovery through education and research.

A photo accompanying this announcement is available at <http://www.globenewswire.com/NewsRoom/AttachmentNg/63084a2f-c001-4b95-a86f-3526cb2f587e>

#### Company Contact:

Pacira Pharmaceuticals, Inc.  
Amber Sears, (973) 254-3587  
[Amber.Sears@pacira.com](mailto:Amber.Sears@pacira.com)

#### Media Contact:

Coyne Public Relations  
Alyssa Schneider, 973-588-2270  
[aschneider@coynepr.com](mailto:aschneider@coynepr.com)



Pacira Pharmaceuticals, Inc