Chronic pain is a major public health problem. It affects…

…more than one-third of people in the United States…

…and about 20 to 30% of the world’s population.¹

The prevalence of persistent pain is expected to rise as the incidence of diseases increases in the aging U.S. population. These diseases include:

- diabetes
- cardiovascular disorders
- obesity
- arthritis
- cancer

Opioids are powerful analgesics which are commonly used and effective for many types of pain. However, opioids can produce significant side effects, including:

- respiratory depression (which can sometimes lead to death)
- mental clouding
- physical dependence
- constipation
- nausea

The prescribing of opioids by clinicians has increased 300% in the last 20 years, contributing to the problem of prescription opioid abuse.

Today, the number of people who die from prescription opioids exceeds the number of those who die from heroin and cocaine combined.²

The 2014 National Institutes of Health Pathways to Prevention Workshop on the Role of Opioids in the Treatment of Chronic Pain will seek to clarify the following:

- Long-term effectiveness of opioids for treating chronic pain
- Potential risks of opioid treatment in various patient populations
- Effects of different opioid management strategies on outcomes related to addiction, abuse, misuse, pain, and quality of life
- Effectiveness of risk mitigation strategies for opioid treatment
- Future research needs and priorities to improve the treatment of pain with opioids.
