

Opioid Analgesic Stewardship in Acute Pain Clinical Care Standard

27 April 2022



Over-reliance



on opioid analgesic medicine
to treat acute pain can cause
unintended harms.

The goal of the Standard

**is not to prohibit access, but
to ensure opioid analgesics
are used appropriately.**

"I was given a prescription that lasted a lot longer than the pain itself. Within only a few months, I was addicted.

I lost everything. I had to leave school, stop playing sport, and I started to watch my life slip away."



A teal background with a spilled orange pill bottle and white capsules. The bottle is tipped over on the left, with its white cap removed and placed nearby. Numerous white, oval-shaped capsules are scattered across the teal surface, some clustered near the bottle and others further away.

3.1 MILLION AUSTRALIANS

have one or more opioid
prescriptions

Prescribing of opioid analgesics for acute pain in hospital settings is a key risk area for initiating treatment and use.



EMERGENCY DEPARTMENTS



POST-OPERATIVE CARE

**2.5
MILLION**

Australians
undergo surgery
annually

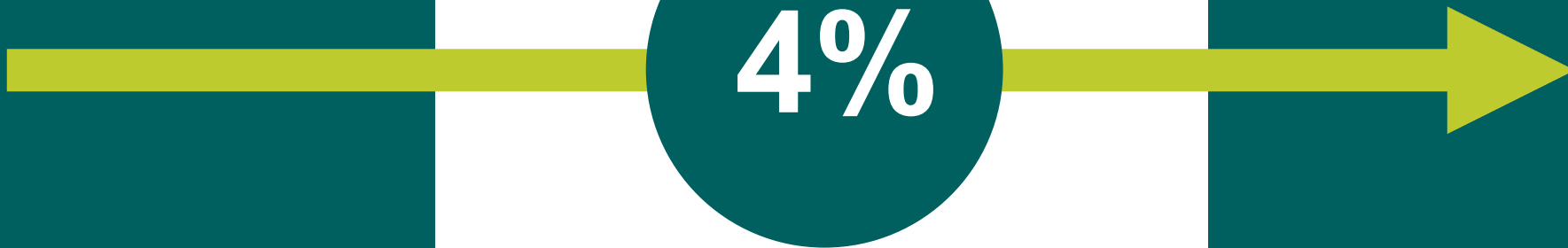


chronic use
develops in
around

4%

**100,000
PEOPLE**

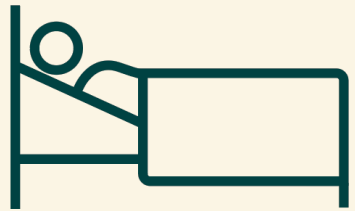
or more are at
risk of becoming
persistent users



Harms associated with over-reliance on opioid analgesics for acute pain

PATIENT HARMS

In hospital



Post discharge



Adverse effects

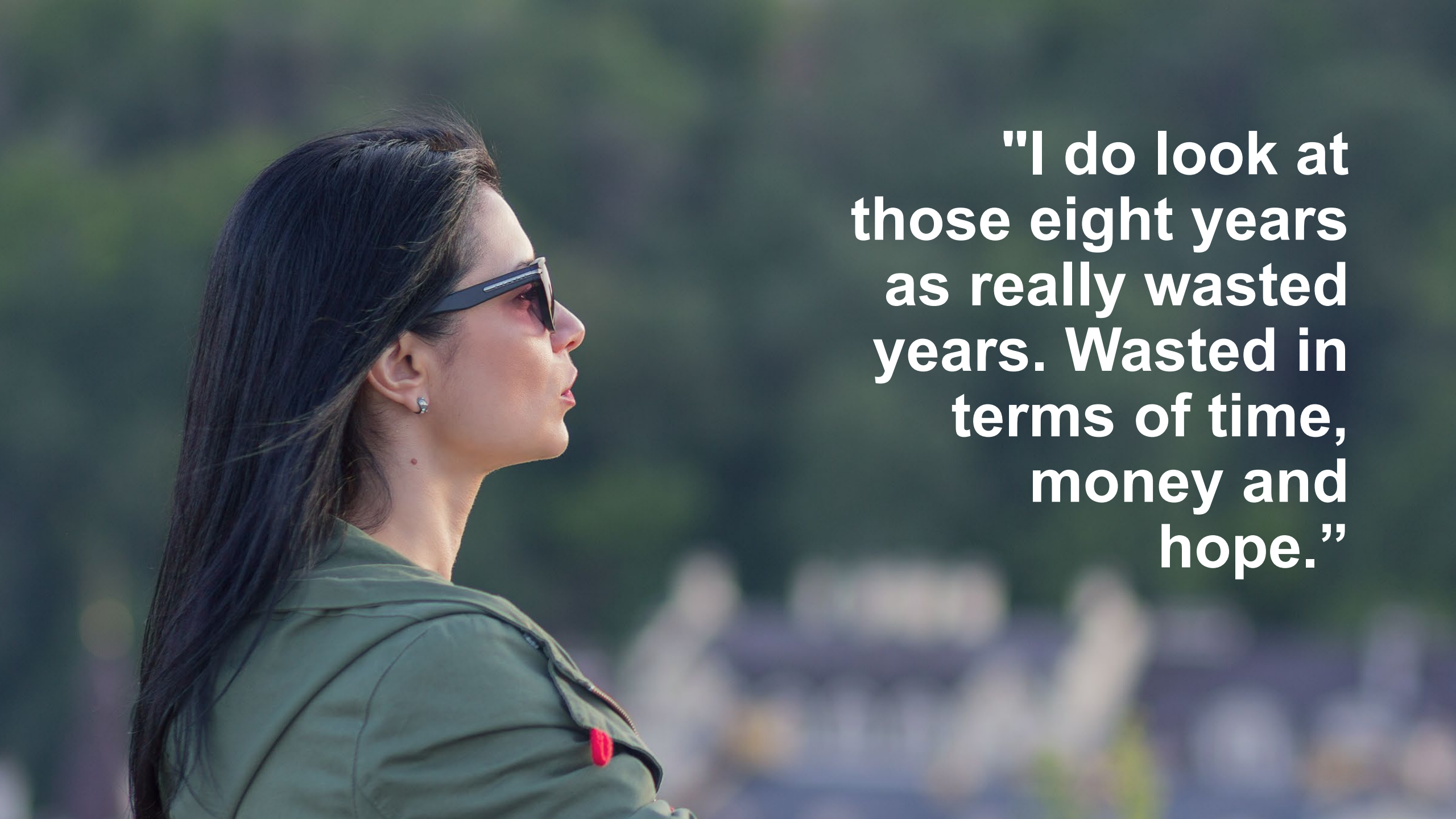
- Nausea and vomiting
- Itch
- Constipation
- Drowsiness
- Respiratory depression

Harms of persistent use

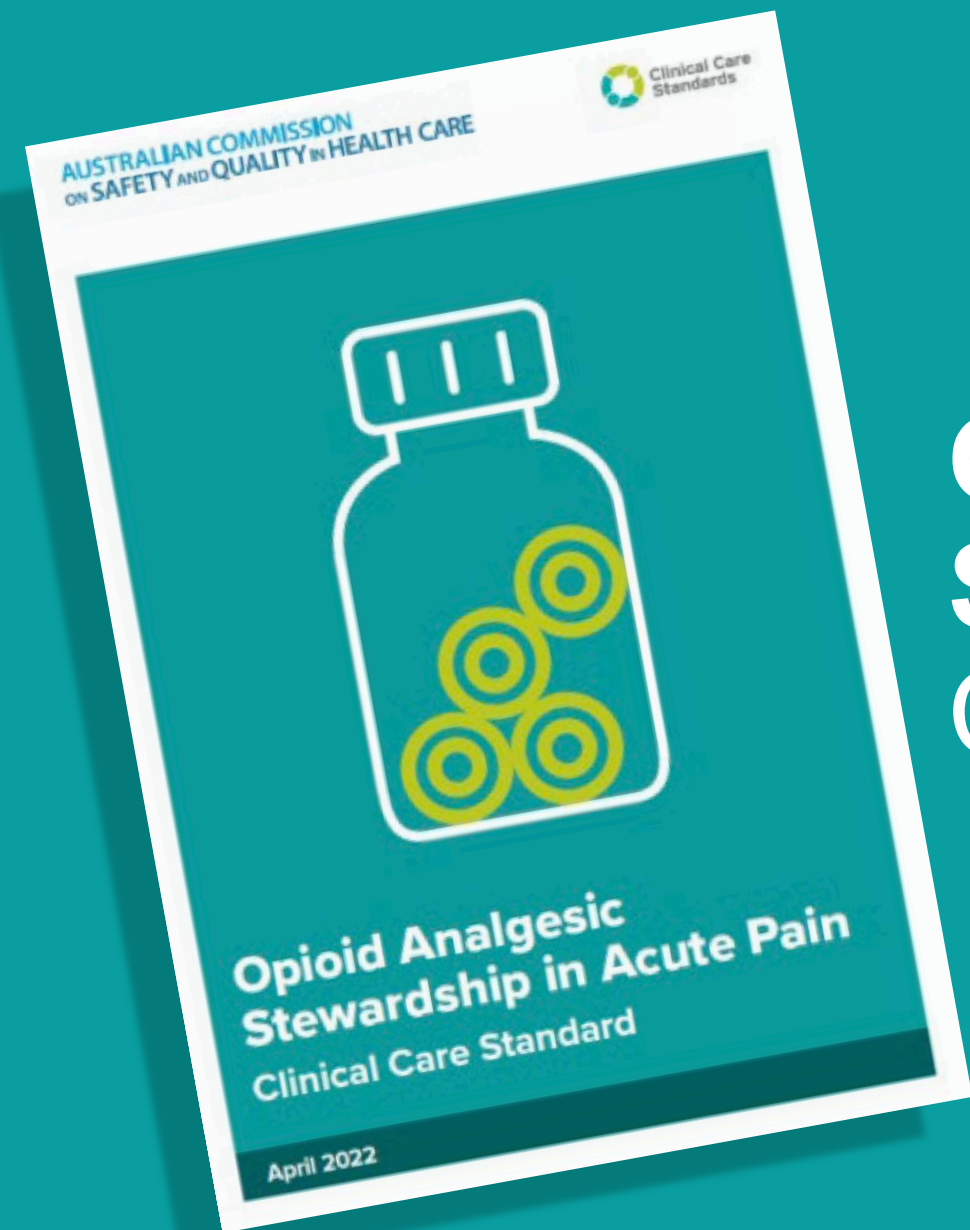
- Impaired ability to function
- Hyperalgesia
- Tolerance/ dependence
- Unintended overdose
- Death

Societal consequences

- Addiction
- Inappropriate use of 'leftover' supplies
- Diversion of opioid analgesics to illicit use

A woman with long dark hair, wearing dark sunglasses and a green jacket, is shown in profile, looking towards the right. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with greenery and a crowd of people.

**"I do look at
those eight years
as really wasted
years. Wasted in
terms of time,
money and
hope."**




Opioid Analgesic Stewardship in Acute Pain Clinical Care Standard

EXPERT CONTRIBUTORS TO THE STANDARD



**Opioid
Analgesic
Stewardship:
a shared
responsibility**



- ✓ **REFLECT**
- ✓ **MODIFY**
- ✓ **ALIGN**

CCS Quality Statements

1. Patient information and shared decision making

2. Acute pain assessment

3. Risk–benefit analysis

4. Pathways of care

5. Appropriate opioid analgesic prescribing

6. Monitoring and management of opioid analgesic adverse effects

7. Documentation

8. Review of therapy

9. Transfer of care

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- ✓ Talk to the patient about their expected recovery pathway
- ✓ Explain the options in a way they can understand, including their risks and benefits
- ✓ Include pharmacological and nonpharmacological options
- ✓ If prescribing opioid analgesics, be guided by both pain levels and functional capacity



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If an opioid analgesic is appropriate:

- ✓ Use an immediate-release formulation (not modified-release)
- ✓ Specify lowest appropriate dose and shortest appropriate duration
- ✓ Be aware that opioid reduction can usually start within one to two days of major surgery
- ✓ Have a plan to help the patient stop using the opioid analgesic as their function and pain improve



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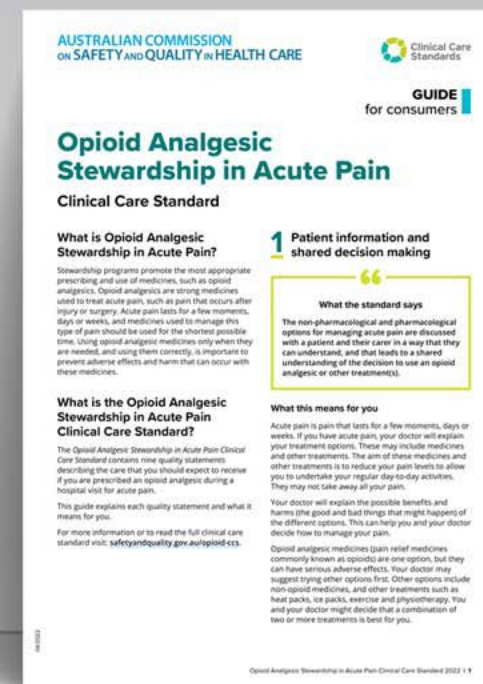
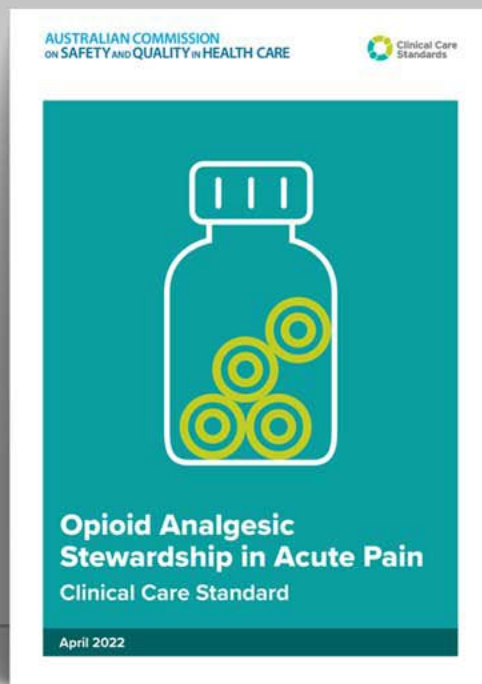
- ✓ While the patient is in hospital, regularly review their pain and ability to function
- ✓ Assess whether the opioid analgesic **is working**; if not, consider alternative treatment
- ✓ Assess whether it **is still needed**; if not take steps to reduce and then cease opioid treatment
- ✓ At discharge, provide a medication management plan for the patient and their GP



Opioid Analgesic Stewardship: a shared responsibility



- ✓ reflect on how we are using opioids
- ✓ modify our reflex behaviours to ensure appropriate use of opioids to relieve pain, and improve function
- ✓ align our actions with the evidence-based recommendations of the **Opioid Analgesic Stewardship in Acute Pain Clinical Care Standard**



CLINICAL CARE STANDARD

FACTSHEETS
FOR CLINICIANS

INFORMATION FOR HEALTH
SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

GUIDE FOR
CONSUMERS

safetyandquality.gov.au/opioid-ccs

