

## Incidence of tramadol shopping behavior in a retrospective cohort of chronic non-cancer pain patients in France.

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### Author information

### Abstract

**PURPOSE:** Opioid analgesic use in chronic non-cancer pain (CNCP) is increasingly prevalent, but the benefits and risks are inadequately understood. In France, tramadol is one of the most used prescription opioids, but studies on its misuse liability in CNCP are still lacking. The aim was to assess the incidence of tramadol shopping behavior in CNCP patients and to identify the associated risk factors.

**METHODS:** A retrospective cohort of CNCP patients aged 18 years and older treated by tramadol for at least six consecutive months between 2005 and 2013 from a sample of the French Health Insurance database was established. Doctor shopping was defined as at least 1 day of overlapping prescriptions written by two or more different prescribers and filled in at least three different pharmacies.

**RESULTS:** A total of 3505 CNCP patients were included with a majority of women (66.4%) and a mean age of  $66.4 \pm 14.7$  years. The median tramadol treatment duration was 260 [interquartile range: 211-356] days. The 1-year incidence rate of tramadol shopping behavior was 1.0% [95%CI: 0.7-1.5]. On multivariate analysis, risk factors associated with tramadol shopping behavior were age (hazard ratio [HR] = 7.4 [95%CI: 2.8-19.7] for age <40, HR = 2.8 [95%CI: 1.0-7.7] for  $40 \leq$  age < 50, versus age  $\geq 50$ ), low-income status (HR = 8.5 [95%CI: 3.6-20.5]), and prior use of strong opioids (HR = 5.7 [95%CI: 1.9-17.0]).

**CONCLUSION:** Tramadol shopping behavior incidence appears low in CNCP patients but may represent a public health concern given the widespread use of tramadol. Education and best monitoring of high-risk patients are needed to reduce doctor shopping. Copyright © 2016 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

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**KEYWORDS:** chronic pain; doctor shopping; misuse; opioid analgesic; pharmacoepidemiology; tramadol

PMID: 27363310 DOI: [10.1002/pds.4056](https://doi.org/10.1002/pds.4056)

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