



Medicines Optimisation Campaigns Painkillers Don't Exist

Communications Toolkit

September 2023

Introduction

The ICB's Medicines Optimisation Team are working to launch four behaviour change campaigns across North East and North Cumbria ICB. These public-facing campaigns complement major ongoing areas of clinical work, where prescribing has an impact on health and outcomes. This toolkit has been designed to help you share the messages with patients and colleagues.

Chronic pain (Painkillers Don't Exist)

Painkillers Don't Exist is a campaign to raise awareness of pain medication dependency, and reduce prescription rates. Tackling the spectrum of opioid use - from low-level use to addiction - the campaign combines awareness-raising with educational resources supporting people with alternative pain management.

About the toolkit

This toolkit provides a brief overview of the medicines optimisation campaign Painkiller Don't Exist that have been running successfully for a number of years and are now being implemented across North East and North Cumbria NHS.

It includes key messages, newsletter items, a one-page staff explainer, links to patient-facing materials and social media posts for you to customise and use in your comms and engagement work.

Promotional Material

A range of promotional materials, such as patient leaflets, posters, digital display screens, and social media graphics, are available to download from the Campaign Hub website (nenc-campaignhub.nhs.uk).

For further information please contact victoriacasey@nhs.net

Key messages

Painkillers Don't Exist - tackling chronic pain and pain addiction

Website - painkillersdontexist.com

- Painkillers Don't Exist is an NHS campaign that aims to raise awareness of the dangerous effects of long-term, high-dose prescription pain medication and empower people living with pain to make informed decisions about their health. It is recognised that all pharmacists can play a role across the health economy in supporting patients in managing pain appropriately.
- Initially an awareness-raising campaign with bold attention-grabbing personal stories, the messaging has evolved to reach people at early stages in their journey/experiences of pain medication: (3-6 months)
- A tried and tested campaign that, alongside other system-wide work in Sunderland and County Durham, has led to a 34% and 19% reduction in opioid prescriptions respectively.
- Campaign materials support GPs, Practice Managers, Pharmacists and Physios to have conversations with patients and support people with alternative pain management
- More resources can be found here: <https://painkillersdontexist.com/campaign/>

General public

What can I do about it?

Have you been on pain medication for more than 3 months? It's time to book a pain review with a pharmacist or GP at your practice. Before your review, try answering these questions:

1. What you hope to gain from your review
2. Your main reason for seeing the doctor
3. Any new symptoms
4. Any medication you have been prescribed and its effect on you

For more information on how to book your review, please visit

<https://painkillersdontexist.com/book-a-review/>

Suggested bulletin/newsletter copy

Painkillers Don't Exist

The Painkillers Don't Exist campaign aims to raise awareness of the issues, dangers and effects of high-dose, long-term painkiller use. Helping patients using painkiller medication to feel empowered to seek support. Online information is available at <https://painkillersdontexist.com/>

GPs and pharmacists will work with patients to identify sustainable, alternative pain management techniques for longer-term chronic pain.

Opioid painkiller drugs are designed to mask pain and will not cure the problem. But, many people do not recognise their own reliance on painkillers or realise that overuse can lead to dependence and addiction, and the need to physically withdraw.

Side effects of prolonged prescription pain medication can be truly debilitating and as well as leaving lasting internal damage to organs like your stomach and liver. They can also lead to nausea, stomach pain, vomiting, changes in personality, respiratory issues, confusion, fatigue, anxiety, hallucinations and overdose through accidental poisoning.

Help us raise awareness of the potential dangers of prescription pain medication:
<https://painkillersdontexist.com/campaign/>

One-page explainer for staff

The North East and North Cumbria ICB Medicines Optimisation Team will be rolling out four impactful behaviour-change campaigns across the region. One of which is Painkillers Don't Exist.

These campaigns align with ongoing clinical work, emphasising the critical role of prescribing in healthcare outcomes:

Chronic pain - Painkillers Don't Exist

- Aims to raise awareness of pain medication dependency and reduce prescription rates.
- Provides educational resources for alternative pain management.
- Supports healthcare professionals in meaningful conversations with patients.

Why are they being launched?

These public-facing campaigns have been developed to complement major ongoing areas of clinical work, where prescribing has an impact on health and outcomes.

How can we help?

There are four main areas where you can help with the roll out of the campaigns and key messages:

Conversations: Engage in meaningful discussions with patients about the campaign topics.

Resources: Utilise campaign materials to support your conversations and educate patients.

Promotion: Encourage patients to visit campaign websites for additional information.

Awareness: Raise awareness of these campaigns within your practice and among colleagues.

Resources for can be found - **Painkillers Don't Exist:**

<https://painkillersdontexist.com/>

Social media posts

Below we have written some sample posts for social media channels, including Facebook and X (formally known as Twitter). Please note that these are to be accompanied by the relevant campaign social graphics which can be downloaded from the Campaign Hub website (nenc-campaignhub.nhs.uk).

Staff facing:

Painkillers Don't Exist

Are you a GP, pharmacist, healthcare professional or in a position to help us promote the Painkillers Don't Exist campaign across your organisation? Visit painkillersdontexist.com/campaign/resources where you can download resources for free

Painkillers Don't Exist

Are you a healthcare professional?

Download the campaign resources and help to educate people on the effects of long-term high-dose pain medication, and empower people living with pain to make informed decisions about their health.

Visit painkillersdontexist.com/campaign to find out more.

Patient facing:

Painkillers Don't Exist

#Didyouknow Some people find that the side effects of pain medication, which can occur in up to four out of every five people (Faculty of Pain Medicine), can be more of a problem than the pain itself. If you're concerned and would like additional support, visit painkillersdontexist.com/support

Painkillers Don't Exist

If you're concerned you might be becoming dependent on pain medication, don't ignore it. Contact a GP or pharmacist at your practice to talk about support and alternative ways to manage your pain. Visit <https://painkillersdontexist.com/about/addiction/> to find out more.

Painkillers Don't Exist

If you're concerned you might be becoming dependent on pain medication, don't ignore it. Contact your practice to talk about support and alternative ways to manage your pain.

For further information on any of the campaigns please contact victoriacasey@nhs.net