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# Patient Perceptions and Expectations About Postoperative Analgesia

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## Introduction

Opioid overdose deaths have nearly quadrupled since 1999. Nearly 2 out of 3 persons being prescribed medications are prescribed an opioid. Physicians may be prescribing opioids for more than what is required for postoperative pain control, leading to increased risk for opioid abuse and addiction. Patient perceptions of perioperative pain medications are poorly understood.

## Objective

This survey aims to understand patient expectations of perioperative analgesics.

## Methods

Following IRB approval, patients 18 years of age or older, were given a 13-question survey prior to their surgery at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital, to evaluate the perception of pain medications, medication efficacy, and risk profile. For this analysis, 503 patients were surveyed and only 5 questions were used.

## Results

Overall, 100% of patients believed they would receive analgesics after surgery, with 76% of patients expecting opioids. Additionally, 94% of patients expecting to receive postoperative opioid prescriptions believed opioids would be effective in controlling their pain. Furthermore, 67.5% of patients not expecting to receive opioids postoperatively still believed opioids would be superior to non-opioid medications.

**Conclusion**

Patients expected to experience pain after surgery and be prescribed analgesics. Patients anticipated receiving analgesics they perceived most effective, which was most often an opioid. The perception of superior efficacy of opioids is worthy of further study as this is inconsistent with the literature, and education may be needed to bridge this gap. As the opioid crisis continues, cultural attitudes toward pain and medications will play a central role in reducing the prevalence of opioids in healthcare and society.