The opioid epidemic and the long-term opioid therapy for chronic noncancer pain revisited: a transatlantic perspective.

Abstract: The rise of opioid prescriptions and associated deaths ('opioid epidemic') in North America has evoked worldwide discussions on the long-term efficacy and safety of long-term opioid therapy (LtOT) for chronic noncancer pain (CNCP). We discuss if the opioid epidemic is a real worldwide or a more North American phenomenon. We consider reasons of the opioid epidemic. We highlight differences in the appraisal of the evidence of recent systematic reviews on LtOT for CNCP of US and European authors. We discuss similarities and differences of recent North American and European guidelines on LtOT for chronic CNCP. We point out potential indications and contraindications of LtOT in CNCP syndromes.