



### **Hand and Upper Extremity Surgery Opioid Policy**

Opioid pain relievers are related to addictive drugs like opium, morphine, and heroin. The use of opioid pain medication is tightly controlled and monitored by the federal government through the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA).

The United States accounts for 80% of the opioid consumption in the world. Research consistently shows that Americans take more opioid medications and are less satisfied with pain relief after injury or surgery than patients with similar problems in other parts of the world. The leading cause of death among young adults in the United States is accidental poisoning. Overdose of prescription opioid pain medication accounts for 90% of these deaths.

#### **Research has shown:**

1. There is unexplained variation in the amount of opioids prescribed by various providers.
2. Most patients take little or no opioids after minor procedures and wean off as quickly as possible after more substantial injuries and surgeries.
3. Guidelines and policies such as this one limit unnecessary prescription and misuse of opioid pain medications.

For our patients' wellbeing we have adopted the following policies for the treatment of post-operative or post-injury pain management.

1. Each patient can receive opioid pain medications from only one provider (e.g. only one hand surgeon or only the primary doctor).
2. Opioids will not be prescribed to a new patient that is already getting regular opioid prescriptions from another provider. We will only prescribe opioids when we take on that role after direct communication with other providers, and clear understanding that we will be the only provider of opioids.
3. New laws require us to check statewide databases for prior opioid prescriptions before prescribing opioids.
4. We receive reports from the DEA and local pharmacies when any patient has more than one prescriber of opioid medications. If we receive such a report on a particular patient, all opioid prescription will cease.
5. We generally adhere to the following practices with respect to opioid pain medication.