

Indicator: Chronic Opioid Use

Indicator Definition

Proportion of home care recipients considered chronic opioid users

Indicator Specification

Numerator data source

PBS

Numerator

Number of permanent residents that are chronic opioid users (Table 1).

Chronic opioid use is defined as receiving any number of opioid medications for at least 90 days continuously, or for 120 non-consecutive days [1]. The number of days of medication use is determined based on the number of units dispensed and estimated dose per day. No gap days between one opioid medication dispensing and another were allowed when determining consecutive use of opioids.

Table 1. Opioids medications, descriptions, ATC codes, PBS codes and estimated usual dose

Description (ATC)	PBS Items	Usual Dose Per Day ¹
Morphine (N02AA01)	08491X, 08492Y, 08493B, 12487F	1
	01653B, 01654C, 01655D, 01656E, 02839K, 02840L, 02841M, 05392T, 05393W, 05394X, 05395Y, 05396B, 08035X, 08349K, 08453X, 08454Y, 08489T, 08494C, 08669G, 08670H, 04349X, 05161P, 05162Q, 05164T, 05165W, 05391R, 12055L, 12009C	2
	08146R, 08305D, 08306E, 08490W	2 sachets
	01646P	4
	02122Q ² , 02123R ² , 02124T ² , 09014K, 09015L, 09016M, 09017N, 05238Q ²	30 mg
Hydromorphone (N02AA03)	09299K, 09406C, 09407D, 09408E, 09409F, 03357Q	1
	08421F, 08420E	12 mg
	05132D ² , 08424J, 11467M, 12582F ²	12mL
	08541M, 08542N, 08543P, 12046B, 12047C, 05115F, 05116G	6
Oxycodone (N02AA05)	08385H, 08386J, 08387K, 08388L, 09399Q, 09400R, 05227D, 05247E, 05248F, 05249G, 05250H, 08681X, 12527H	2
	05191F, 05194J, 05195K, 08464L, 08501K, 08502L, 02481N, 02622B, 05191F, 05197M, 05198N ³ , 12031F, 12023T, 12048D, 12314D, 12044X, 13233L, 12074L, 12311Y	4
	08644Y ² , 05190E	20 mL
Oxycodone + Naloxone (N02AA55)	08000C, 08934F, 08935G, 08936H, 10757E, 10758F, 10776E, 11102H, 11111T	2
Fentanyl ⁴ (N02AB03)	05265D, 05277R, 05278T, 05279W, 05280X, 05437E, 05438F, 05439G, 05440H, 05441J, 08878G, 08891Y, 08892B, 08893C, 08894D, 08337T, 08338W, 08339X, 08340Y	1 patch per 3 days
Dextropropoxyphene (N02AC04)	04081T	6
Methadone (N02AC52)	01609Q	3
	05399E ² , 05400F ²	6 mL
	01606M	3mL (injection)
Buprenorphine (N02AE01)	08865N, 08866P, 08866P, 08867Q, 10746N, 10755C, 10756D, 10770W, 10948F, 10949G, 10953L, 10957Q, 10959T, 10964C, 10970J	1 patch per 7 days

Codeine + paracetamol (N02AJ06)	01215Y, 03316M, 04170L, 04171M, 04275B, 08785J, 10186D, 12022R, 12066C	8
Codeine + aspirin (N02AA59 / N02AJ07)	01222H, 04286N	8
Tramadol (N02AX02)	02527B, 08523N, 08524P, 08525Q, 03338Q, 05234L, 05235M, 05236N	2
	05001F, 09199E, 09200F, 09201G	1
	05232J, 08455B, 08611F, 12008B, 12024W	4
	08582Q, 05231H	4 mL injection
	08843K, 05150C	4 mL
Tapentadol (N02AX06)	10091D, 10092E, 10094G, 10096J, 10100N	2
Codeine (N02AA)	05063L, 01214X, 12065B, 12054K	4

¹Quantity per day in tablets or capsules unless otherwise stated.

²Pharmacists were allowed to dispense volumes smaller than a whole bottle at PBS-subsidised prices (from 1 Aug2022: PBS item 12582F; from 1 Feb 2023: PBS items 02122Q, 02123R, 02124T, 08644Y; from 1 Jul 2023: PBS items 05399E, 05400F).

³Removed from the PBS in 2011.

⁴Fentanyl lozenges (PBS items 10684H, 10697B, 10698C, 10729Q, 10737D) were excluded as clinical indication on the PBS for cancer treatment and palliative care only.

ATC: Anatomical Therapeutic Chemical. **PBS:** Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

Denominator

Number of home care recipients

Exclusions

Exclude home care recipients who are receiving pharmacological cancer treatment (Table 2)

Table 2. Cancer treatment description, ATC codes

Data Source	Description	Codes
PBS	Antineoplastic and immunomodulating agents ⁵	L01*

⁵Determined using 6 months of PBS prescription data prior to the study period.

ATC: Anatomical Therapeutic Chemical Classification System. **PBS:** Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

Covariates

Age, sex, number of health conditions excluding pain

Stratifications

None

Comments

Continuous opioid use for 90 days: Opioids may begin before the start of the reporting period or date of entry into home care package services for new recipients, provided that day 90 of continuous use occurs within the reporting period.

120 days non-consecutive refers to either: (1) total days of opioid use during the reporting period is ≥ 120 OR (2) total days of opioid use in the reporting period (including opioid use in the 180 days period prior to the reporting period start date or date of entry into permanent residential care for new residents during the reporting period) is ≥ 120 days, with at least one day of opioid use during the reporting period.

Suggested citation: Registry of Senior Australians. Home Care Outcome Monitoring System Technical Specification – Chronic Opioid Use. Version 4.0. South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute. Adelaide, Australia; August 2026, 3 pages.

Any enquires about, or comments on, this Technical Specification document should be directed to:

Registry of Senior Australians (ROSA) Research Centre
South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute
PO Box 11060, Adelaide SA 5001
Ph: +61 (08) 8128 4662
Email: ROSA.OMS@flinders.edu.au
Website: <https://rosaresearch.org/>

References

1. Von Korff M, Saunders K, Thomas Ray G, Boudreau D, Campbell C, Merrill J, et al. De facto long-term opioid therapy for noncancer pain. Clin J Pain. 2008;24(6):521-7.