

## Preface

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Optimal treatment of patients with chronic, moderate to severe pain presents a number of challenges for physicians and other healthcare providers. It is not always clear when opioid pain medication is most appropriate. If opioids are indicated, which medications are optimal for a specific pain problem, what should be done if the medication is not well tolerated, and how long should the patient be treated? Clinicians may be reluctant to prescribe opioid pain medications because they are increasingly concerned about the possibility that they may be causing opioid addiction in some individuals, or that state or federal monitoring agencies may accuse them of inappropriate prescribing.

The purpose of this Pocket Guide is to provide a user-friendly, logically organized, and comprehensive guide to the evaluation and treatment of patients who might benefit from opioid analgesia. The goal is to provide easily accessible information to practicing clinicians that addresses their concerns about prescribing opioids, while at the same time providing for the safe and effective treatment of their patients with chronic, moderate to severe pain. Evidence-based information about assessing the risk of opioid abuse, how to prevent or manage side effects of opioids, when and how to discontinue opioid treatment, and practical tips on how to organize your office to support safe opioid prescribing and limit the likelihood of opioid abuse are all included.

The first part of the Guide provides general information about the assessment and long-term management of chronic pain patients with opioids. This is followed by a series of appendices that contain detailed “how-to” information, as well as examples of commonly used tools especially useful for determining the risk that a particular patient might misuse his or her opioid prescription. The Guide has been specifically designed to be small enough to carry with you while seeing patients in the clinic, and it includes tabs for easy access to information regarding specific opioid-related questions. We hope you find this reference useful.

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