

COMPARING PRESCRIPTION OPIOID USE AMONG HEROIN ABUSERS USING THE RADARS® SYSTEM EUROPAD PROGRAM

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Introduction

- Heroin is the most reported misused opioid in Europe¹, and opioid users entering treatment indicate heroin as their primary drug nearly 80% of the time².
- Understanding the population of heroin users is vital to optimizing treatment and sustained recovery. The Researched Abuse, Diversion and Addiction-Related Surveillance (RADARS®) System EUROPAD Program surveys patients entering treatment programs for substance use disorder in six European countries. This program allows respondents to indicate their primary drug as well as any drugs abused in the past 90 days.
- For this analysis, we aim to examine the prevalence of past 90 day prescription opioid abuse among individuals who abuse heroin.

Methods

- Data from the EUROPAD Program from France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain, and the United Kingdom from 01 October 2014 through 30 June 2017 were used in this analysis.
- Respondents to the survey were included in the analysis if they indicated heroin abuse in the 90 days before entering treatment.
- The percentage of those who also indicated abuse of a prescription opioid (buprenorphine, codeine, fentanyl, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, morphine, methadone, oxycodone, oxymorphone, sufentanil, tramadol, and tapentadol) was calculated and compared across countries.
- Logistic regression was used to evaluate how the risk for heroin endorsers who also endorsed a prescription opioid differed by country, with the United Kingdom used as the reference country.

Results

- A total of 1,865 respondents completed the survey from all countries (604 in France, 277 in Germany, 162 in Italy, 194 in Norway, 151 in Spain, and 477 in the United Kingdom).
- Of the 1,865, 45.4% of respondents (59 in France, 190 in Germany, 109 in Italy, 97 in Norway, 70 in Spain, and 321 in the United Kingdom) endorsed heroin abuse and were included in the analysis.
- In the United Kingdom (Table 1 and Figure 1), 42.1% of heroin endorsers also endorsed abuse of a prescription opioid in the past 90 days. Both Spain and Italy had similar percentages and did not significantly differ from the United Kingdom (37.1% and 41.3%, respectively). France, Germany, and Norway had higher percentages of heroin endorsers who also endorsed a prescription opioid in the past 90 days (61.0%, 57.4% and 70.1%, respectively), significantly higher than rates in the United Kingdom (p-values: 0.008, 0.001, and <0.001 respectively).

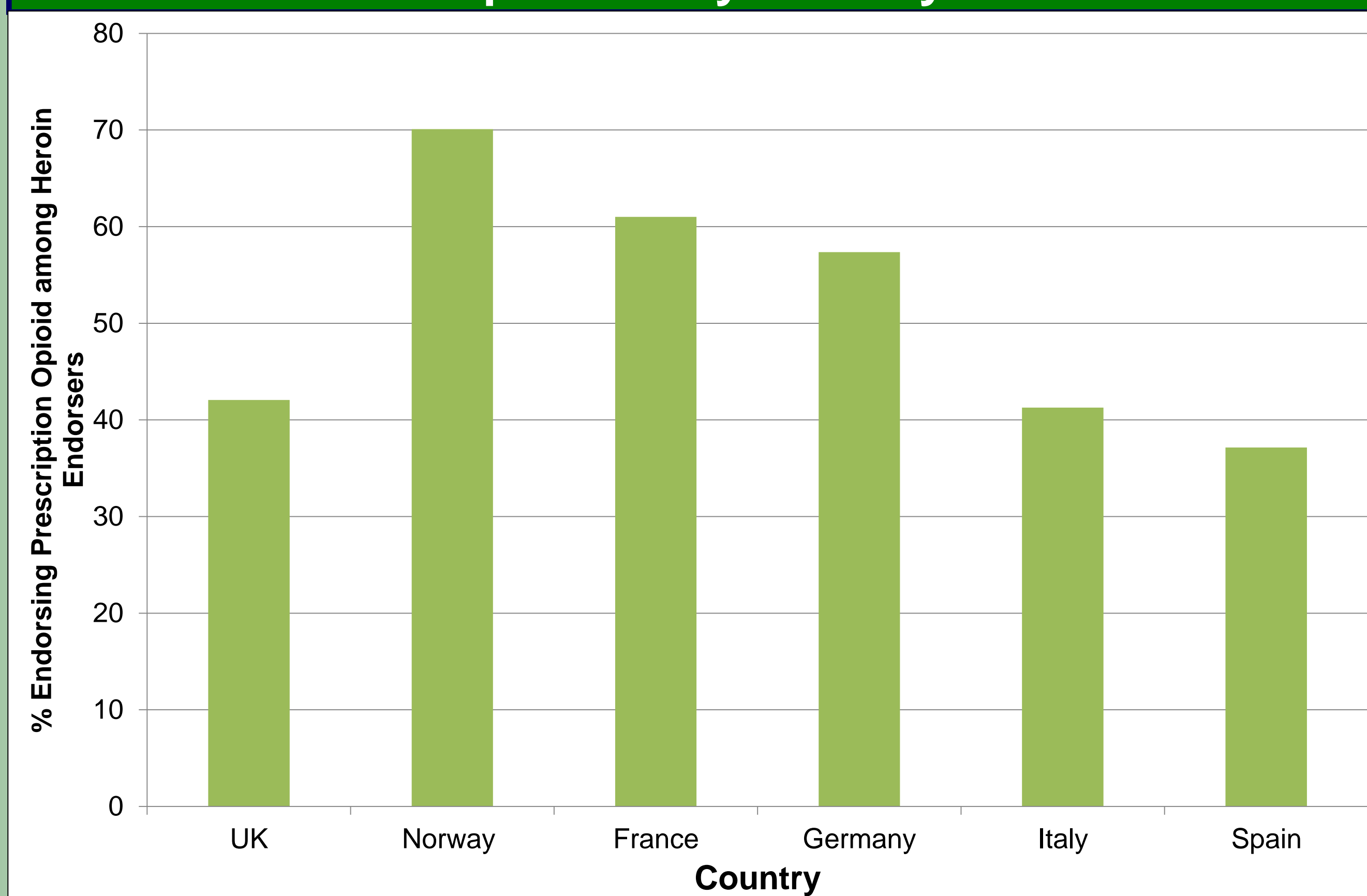
Conclusions

- Polysubstance use is common among people who abuse opioids¹. Knowledge about which opioids are most commonly abused may provide a better understanding of this population.
- Individuals who abuse prescription opioids in conjunction with heroin represent a potentially advanced abuser, obtaining both prescription opioids, which are often accessed through legitimate channels to treat pain, and illicit products.
- Further description of the relationship between heroin and prescription opioid use will allow treatment providers to tailor therapies to individuals who abuse both heroin and prescription opioids.

Table 1. Prescription Opioid Abuse among Respondents who Abuse Heroin – by Country

Country	Percentage Endorsing Prescription Opioid among Heroin Endorsers	p-value
United Kingdom	42.1%	Ref
Norway	70.1%	<0.001
France	61.0%	0.008
Germany	57.4%	0.001
Italy	41.3%	0.89
Spain	37.1%	0.45

Figure 1. Endorsers of Heroin who Endorse Prescription Opioids – by Country



References

- EMCDDA, <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/publications/edr/trends-developments/2015/online/chapter20>
- EMCDDA, <http://www.emcdda.europa.eu/system/files/publications/4541/TDAT17001ENN.pdf>



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