The increased use of opioids for pain management in America has created a national health crisis. Opioid prescription rates have quadrupled since 1999, leading to similar increases in prescription opioid deaths and heroin deaths.

In response, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released guidelines in March 2016 urging prescribers to reduce the use of opioids in favor of safer alternatives in the treatment of chronic pain. Physical therapy is one of the recommended nonopioid alternatives.

Physical therapists treat pain through movement, helping patients improve strength, flexibility, and range of motion. Physical therapists also can educate their patients about pain, which has been known to improve outcomes.

Physical therapy is effective for numerous conditions, and the CDC cited “high quality evidence” supporting exercise as part of physical therapist treatment for familiar conditions like low back pain, hip and knee osteoarthritis, and fibromyalgia.

### REFERENCES