



# Analgesic Consumption Following Outpatient Carpal Tunnel Release; Are We Prescribing Too Many?

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## Background

Over the past decade, there has been an increase in number of prescribed and used analgesics in united states. After elective outpatient carpal tunnel surgery, patients' need for opioid analgesic medication may be considerably less than typically dispensed. Few reports have examined actual consumption after elective surgery. A better understanding of actual opioid consumption after elective upper extremity surgery may lead to improved prescribing practices and less leftover medication available for diversion.

## Aims:

1. Evaluate pain control and quantify the amount of leftover pain medication
1. Develop a Protocol for pain med prescription following carpal tunnel release

## Materials and Methods

A prospective review of all patients scheduled for elective outpatient CTR ( Dec 2011- April 2012) was conducted independently by two main authors ( A.I, B.P). All CTR was conducted by the senior author (A.I), using a mini-open technique in an out-patient setting, using local anesthetics only. A bulky dressing was applied post operation. All patients were discharged home following the CTR, and encouraged to removed their dressing on post operative day 1.

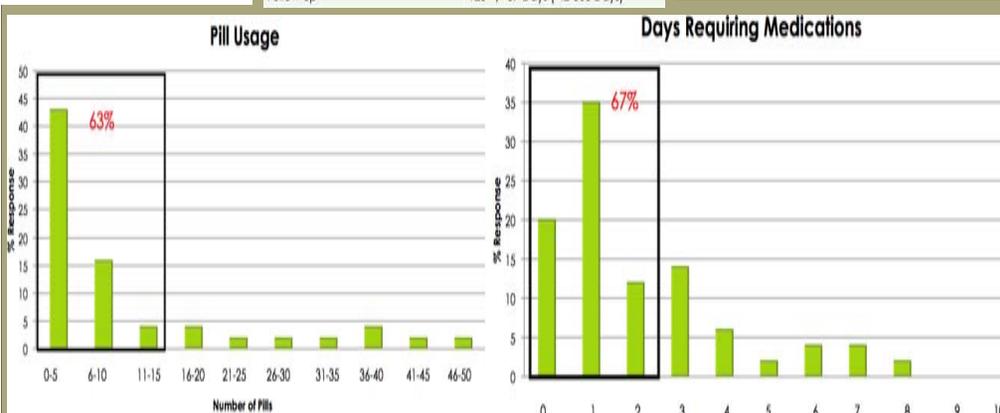
## Results

Age ( Mean +/- SD)	57.04 +/- 18.8 (18-88)	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Sex		>18 year-old	Pain syndrome ( CRPS)
Male	17 (34%)	English speaking	Chronic use of pain medications
Female	32 (66%)	Consented to enroll in study	Previous injury to the operated hand
Side			Redo/Revisions
Unilateral	37 patients (75%)		Pregnancy
Bilateral	12 Patients (25%)		
Type			
Tylenol #3	39 patients (80%)		
Tramacet	10 Patients (20%)		
Number of pills prescribed	40-50		
Follow up	125 +/- 87 Days ( 42-368 Days)		



## Conclusion

The average number of Tylenol # 3 consumed was 10.46 (0-50 tabs) 44 % patients consumed less than 5 tablets. Smoking was associated with higher consumption of pain medication, although not statistically significant ( P= 0.56). The average post operative days for consumption of analgesic were 2.33 (0-7 day). Five patients continued to wear their pre-operative splint for average of 2 weeks. Overall there were a total **1,531** leftover tablets for the entire cohort. Our data showed that excess prescribed analgesics are made available after elective carpal tunnel surgery. Based on these data, we recommend prescribing no more than 20 pills, with an option for 1 refill.



- Cost ?
- 50 Tylenol #3: 17.30 \$
- 0.35 cents per pill
- 50 Tramacet: 58.13 \$
- 1.16 \$ per pill

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