Case Study

A 42-year-old man with a history of total hip replacement presented for first-time visit with complaints of hip pain. One year ago he had a displaced left femoral neck fracture requiring total hip replacement with subsequent chronic hip pain. His pain was managed by his orthopedist, originally with oxycodone and more recently with ibuprofen. Recent extensive reevaluation of his hip pain was negative.

He requested that his orthopedist prescribe something stronger like “oxys” for his pain, as the ibuprofen was ineffective. He was told to discuss his pain management with his primary care physician (you). He’s been on disability since his hip surgery and lives with his wife and two children. He has a history of depression since age 40 which is being treated with sertraline 100mg daily. He denies current or past alcohol, tobacco, or drug use.

Currently, he’s on ibuprofen 800 mg three times per day. He walks with a limp and uses a cane. His vitals are normal. He’s 6 feet tall and weighs 230 pounds. He has a large, well-healed scar over the left lateral thigh and hip area with no tenderness or warmth over the hip. He has full range of motion. He doesn’t want to return to his orthopedist, because “he doesn’t believe that I’m still in pain.”

Part 1 Questions:
A. Is he drug seeking?
B. Are opioid analgesics indicated?
C. Were there any red or yellow flags in the case presentation?

One month later: The patient is currently taking oxycodone 5 mgs, every six hours, 120 per month, as you have prescribed. He rates his pain as “15” out of 10 all the time and describes no improvement in function.

Part 2 Question:
A. Should you increase his dose of oxycodone?
B. If yes, what new dosage would you recommend?
C. If no, what new treatment(s) would you recommend?

The patient is transitioned to sustained-relief morphine, and he signed a controlled substance agreement. After a stable period of several months, he surprises you by presenting without an appointment and requesting an early refill.

Part 3 Questions:
A. Is he addicted to morphine?
B. What additional information do you need?

Adapted by Christina Delos Reyes, MD from NIDAMED website in June 2014 http://www.drugabuse.gov/nidamed-medical-health-professionals/centers-excellence/substance-use-disorder-patient-case-studies