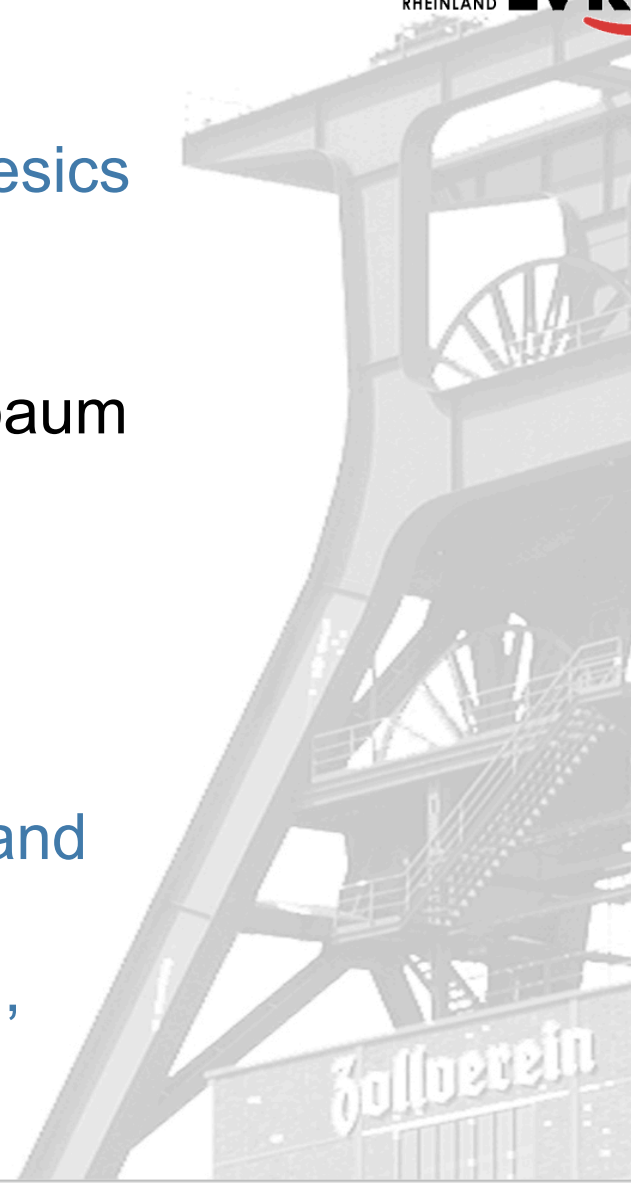


Misuse and Abuse of Opioid Analgesics – the Role of the Internet

H. Siemann, J. Schnell, N. Scherbaum

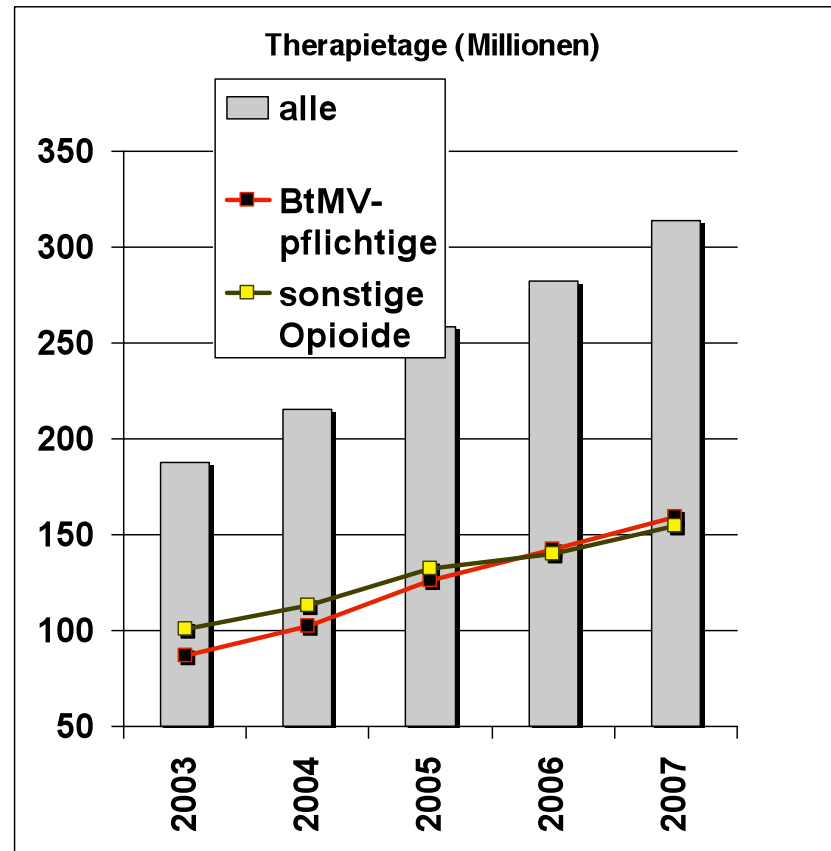
LVR Hospital Essen,
Clinic for Dependent Behavior and
Addiction Medicine
University of Duisburg-Essen,
Germany



Opioid Analgesics

- Prescription Drugs
 - Tramadol, Tilidine, Codeine, Loperamide
 - Easy to prescribe
- Schedule III Drugs according to the German Narcotics Act (BtmG)
 - Morphine, Methadone, Fentanyl, Buprenorphine, Oxycodone
 - Special conditions to be fulfilled for a valid prescription

Prescription Rate



Non-Scheduled Opioids

- Tramadol
 - Pain management (post-surgery treatment, injury treatment)
- Tilidine + Naloxone (Valoron N[®])
 - Higher analgesic potency
 - Prevention of parenteral drug abuse by combination with the μ -receptor antagonist Naloxone

Aim of the Study

- To assess the role of the internet regarding the abuse of prescription opioids
 - Role as a trading platform
 - Role as an information system

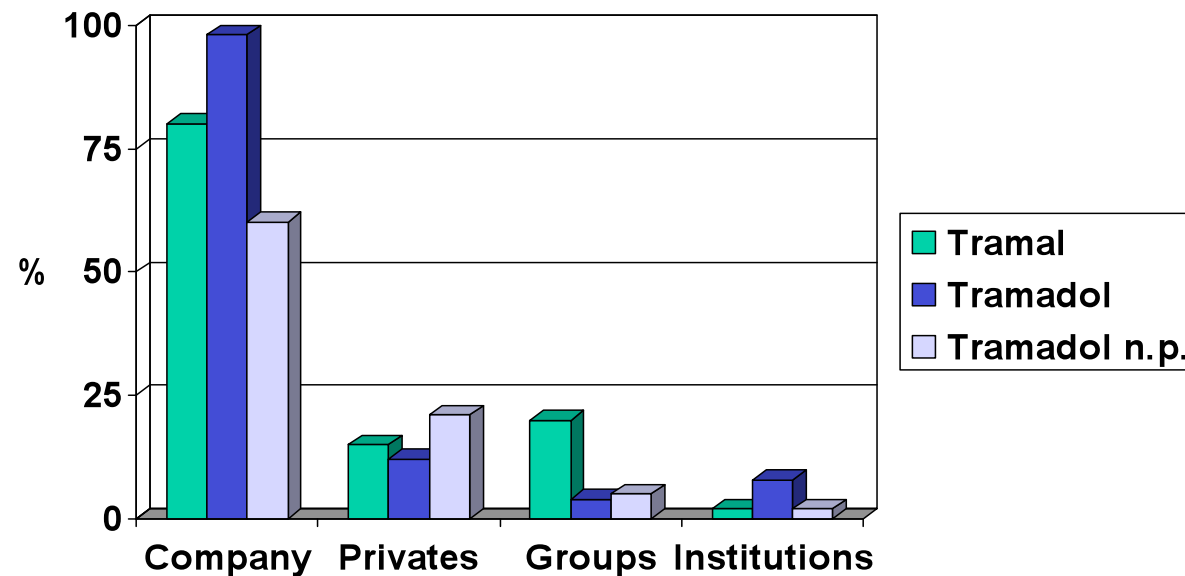
Methods

- Analysis of the first 50 websites provided by the leading search engine Google for the 3 search terms:
 - Tramal (registered trademark)
 - Tramadol
 - Tramadol rezeptfrei (no need for a valid prescription)
- ➔ 150 websites
- No focus on Tilidine due to the combination with Naloxone and the low abuse potential

Results

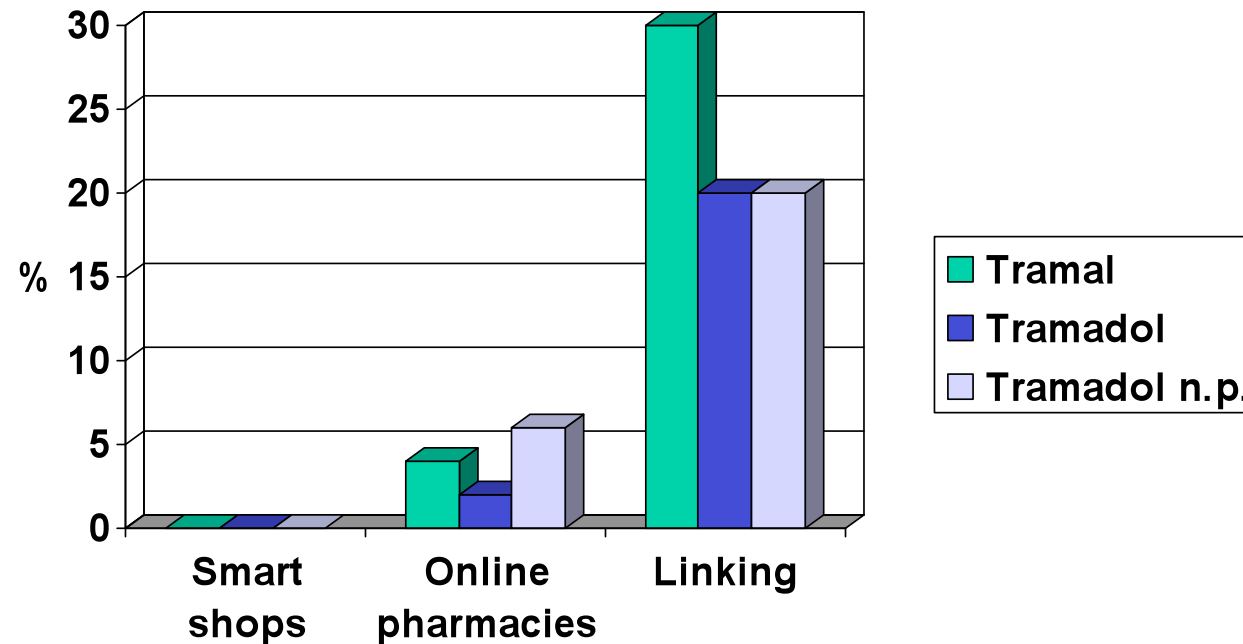
- Analysis of 150 websites
- About 800 webpages
- Following some discussion boards in addition

Site Ownership



- High number of commercial websites
- Only small amount of private and institutional/governmental websites

Trading



- Smart/Head/Herbal shops focus on herbal drugs
- Online pharmacies focus on life-style drugs

Role as a Trading Platform

- Only a low number of opioid drug distributing websites
 - Interdiction of „online“ prescriptions in Germany
 - need for valid prescription
 - 2 sites from the Netherlands offering online prescription
 - Need for a credit card
 - Delayed access
 - Suspicion because of high quality fake sites (credit card number phishing, money transfer)

Role as an Information System

- Mainly a pro-drug consumption attitude
 - Many commercial sites
 - Use of tramadol as a regular analgesic drug: „if my doctor is prescribing this drug it can't be harmful“
- Information about methods to obtain opioid analgesics

Examples



- Tilidine + Naloxone:
 - Different boiling points
 - Usage of toaster to separate both substances from each other
 - Inhalation of Tilidine

- Tramadol:
 - How to get your doctor to prescribe an opioid analgesic (e.g. chronic pain)
 - How to forge a prescription



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Thank you!

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