

*National Pain Report*

# The Media Reporting About Chronic Pain and Opioids is Changing

By Ed Coghlan  
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It has taken some time, but the evidence that the nation’s media are beginning to hear and cover the ‘side’ of the chronic pain patient in the opioid debate is mounting.

This weekend, the New York Times—the nation’s most influential newspaper—ran an opinion piece by Maia Szalavitz who is the author of “Unbroken Brain: A Revolutionary New Way of Understanding Addiction.”

She argues:

“By working to reduce prescribing, government regulators, insurers, law enforcement officials, legislators and other policymakers have ignored the genuine dangers of leaving people in agony, including suicide and increased risk for heart attacks and strokes.”

## **New Hampshire Series**

The opioid argument, while federally inspired (CDC Guidelines/DEA crackdowns) is really being fought on a state by state basis. In New Hampshire, the debate has been spirited. Manchester Union Leader reporter Shawne Wickham wrote a series of articles.

One of the articles, entitled *Chronic Pain Patients: the baby w/ the bathwater* features Dr. David Nagel, a frequent contributor to the National Pain Report. Here’s how the reporter described what Nagel told a group of medical leaders in his state.

*“When Dr. David Nagel gave a presentation on pain management last fall for the New Hampshire Medical Society, he put up a photo of an unhappy baby sitting in a bathtub. It’s an analogy for what he sees as an unintended consequence of the battle against the opioid epidemic, he explained: the negative impact on chronic pain patients.*

*“The title of Nagel’s talk was: “The Opioid Crisis: The art of creating one public health tragedy out of another.”*

(Dr. Nagel is writing an analysis of the NIH Draft Report for the National Pain Report)

### **Fox News Series on Chronic Pain Continues to Resonate**

Last, but certainly not least, there is the series by Foxnews.com reporter Elizabeth Llorente which ran late last year was a comprehensive review that featured five different stories. I personally had several conversations with the reporter as she worked hard to understand the issue—particularly from the point of view of the chronic pain patient.

Part One spoke about how the reduction in opioid access was driving many to suicide.

<https://www.foxnews.com/health/as-opioids-become-taboo-doctors-taper-down-or-abandon-pain-patients-driving-many-to-suicide>

The Second part spoke to the pressure on doctors from law enforcement.

<https://www.foxnews.com/health/doctors-abandon-opioid-prescribing-as-state-and-federal-authorities-step-up-enforcement>

The third part included a story which focused what might be done going forward.

<https://www.foxnews.com/health/undoing-the-harm-of-the-response-to-the-opioid-overdose-epidemic-health-experts-suggest-solutions>

Not surprisingly to those of who cover pain, the Foxnews.com series generated a lot of response from readers and the reporter wrote on that as well.

<https://www.foxnews.com/health/readers-respond-to-special-report-about-the-opioid-crisis-unintended-victims-pain-sufferers-losing-access-to-painkillers>