# Appendix 19: DIRE score: patient selection for chronic opioid analgesia

For each factor, rate the client’s score from 1-3 based on the explanations in the right-hand column.

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| **Score** | **Factor** | **Explanation** |
|  | **D**iagnosis | 1 = Benign chronic condition with minimal objective findings or no definite medical diagnosis. Examples: fibromyalgia, migraine headaches, nonspecific back pain.  2 = Slowly progressive condition concordant with moderate pain, or fixed condition with moderate objective findings. Examples: failed back surgery syndrome, back pain with moderate degenerative changes, neuropathic pain.  3 = Advanced condition concordant with severe pain with objective findings. Examples: severe ischemic vascular disease, advanced neuropathy, severe spinal stenosis. |
|  | **I**ntractability | 1 = Few therapies have been tried and the patient takes a passive role in his/her pain management process.  2 = Most customary treatments have been tried but the patient is not fully engaged in the pain management process, or barriers prevent (insurance, transportation, medical illness).  3 = Patient fully engaged in a spectrum of appropriate treatments but with inadequate response. |
|  | **R**isk | **(R = Total of P+C+R+S below)** |
|  | **P**sychological | 1 = Serious personality dysfunction or mental illness interfering with care.  2 = Personality or mental health interferes moderately. Example: depression or anxiety disorder.  3 = Good communication with clinic. No significant personality dysfunction or mental illness. |
|  | **C**hemical health | 1 = Active or very recent use of illicit drugs, excessive alcohol, or prescription drug abuse.  2 = Chemical coper (uses medications to cope with stress) or history of chemical dependency in remission.  3 = No chemical dependency history. Not drug-focussed or chemically reliant. |
|  | **R**eliability | 1 = History of numerous problems: medication misuse, missed appointments, rarely follows through.  2 = Occasional difficulties with compliance, but generally reliable.  3 = Highly reliable patient with medications, appointments and treatment. |
|  | **S**ocial support | 1 = Life in chaos. Little family support and few close relationships. Loss of most normal life roles.  2 = Reduction in some relationships and life roles.  3 = Supportive family/close relationships. Involved in work or school and no social isolation. |
|  | **E**fficacy score | 1 = Poor function or minimal pain relief despite moderate to high doses.  2 = Moderate benefit with function improved in a number of ways (or insufficient information – hasn’t tried opioid yet or very low doses or too short of a trial).  3 = Good improvement in pain and function and quality of life with stable doses over time. |

Total score = D + I + R + E

Score 7–13: Not a suitable candidate for long-term opioid analgesia.

Score 14–21: May be a suitable candidate for long-term opioid analgesia.

Source: Miles Belgrade, Fairview Pain and Palliative Care Centre 2005.