

ATTENTION Practitioners!

PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE ALERT

Non-Medical Use of Rx Drugs a Growing Health Crisis

Prescription drug abuse is an increasing problem that endangers the public health and safety. This is not about taking the wrong dose of medicine by mistake. This is about some patients purposely abusing prescription controlled substances, either their own or someone else's, for non-medical purposes.

The federal Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN), which monitors drug-related emergency department (ED) visits nationwide, recently reported that the two most frequently mentioned prescription medications in drug abuse-related cases are benzodiazepines and opiates.

In 2004 (the most recent year for which complete information is available), benzodiazepines accounted for over 140,000 ED visits categorized as drug abuse-related cases. During the same period, abuse of the opiates methadone, oxycodone and hydrocodone combined for more than 110,000 ED visits.

DAWN statistics also show that emergency room visits due to abuse of prescription drugs are more than the number of visits due to abuse of marijuana and heroin combined.

TEEN RX DRUG ABUSE FACTS

- 1.5 million American kids have reported that they've abused prescription drugs.
- 2.1 million American kids have intentionally abused cough syrup. Every day 2,700 teens try a prescription medicine to get high for the first time.
- Half of teens do not see a great risk in abusing prescription (Rx) or over-the-counter (OTC) drugs. Teens believe that abuse of Rx and OTC medicines is safer than street drugs. Such drugs are easily accessible from home medicine cabinets and over the Internet.
- Over half of teens agree prescription drugs are easier to get than illegal drugs.
- 1 in 3 teens report having a close friend who abuses Rx pain relievers to get high.
- 1 in 4 teens report having a close friend who abuses cough medicine to get high.
- Only 31% of teens "learn a lot about the risk of drugs" from their parents.

WHAT CAN HEALTHCARE PRACTITIONERS DO?

Most patients take prescription medications responsibly, as directed by their prescribers. However, practitioners must also be aware of the increasing problem with prescription drug abuse. Practitioners prescribing controlled substances can counsel patients to the danger posed by taking these medications in a way not directed for treatment or by combining them with other medications or alcohol. Practitioners can also counsel parents to secure their prescriptions, so that children are not tempted to experiment. And if prescription drugs are left over from a previous condition, patients should properly dispose of them afterward as soon as possible.



COMMONLY-ABUSED PRESCRIPTION MEDICATION

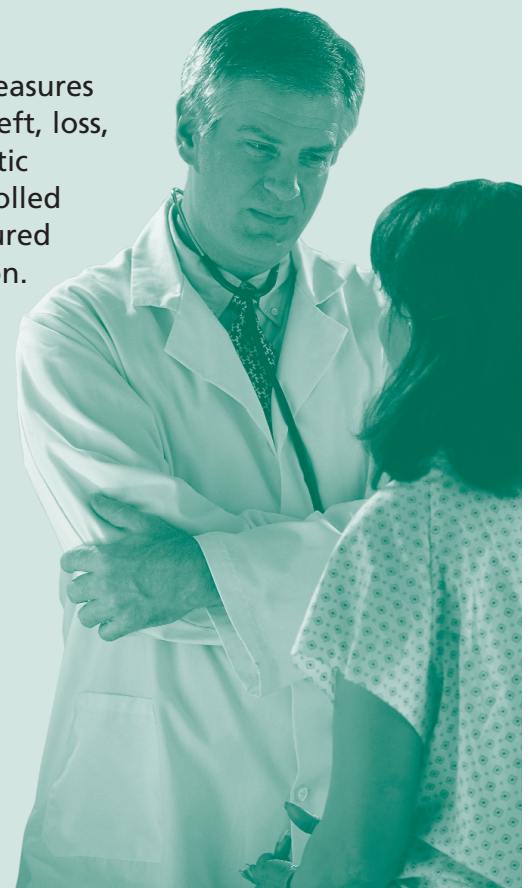
- **Narcotics.** Also known as opiates. Prescribed to relieve pain. Examples include morphine (liquid Roxanol, MS Contin), oxycodone (Percocet, Percodan, OxyContin), hydrocodone (Vicodin, Lortab, Norco), methadone, fentanyl (Duragesic patch, Actiq lozenge) and hydromorphone (Dilaudid).
- **Depressants.** Prescribed to treat anxiety, seizures and sleep disorders. Includes barbiturates and benzodiazepines. Examples are pentobarbital (Nembutal), diazepam (Valium), and alprazolam (Xanax).
- **Stimulants.** Prescribed to treat attention-deficit disorder (AD/HD). Examples include methylphenidate (Ritalin, Concerta) and amphetamine (Dexedrine, Adderall).
- **Anabolic Steroids.** Prescribed to treat hormone deficiency in males and breast cancer in females. Examples include testosterone (AndroGel, Androderm patch, Depo-testosterone, and Delatestryl injection), and stanazolol (Winstrol).

Protect Your Practice Against Drug-Seekers

Practitioners must employ adequate safeguards and security measures to protect their official New York State prescriptions against theft, loss, or unauthorized use. You also must notify the Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement of any loss, theft, or unauthorized use. Any controlled substances maintained for office use must also be properly secured and appropriate records kept of their receipt and administration.

Practitioners should also take precautions to protect themselves against “doctor shopping,” a major source of drug diversion and abuse whereby drug-seeking individuals illegally obtain controlled substances from multiple practitioners without their knowledge for addiction and trafficking.

Under the new law expanding New York’s Official Prescription Program, the Department of Health will notify practitioners when an analysis of prescription data indicates that a patient is receiving controlled substances from multiple practitioners. The notification will contain information for arranging rehabilitation treatment, if necessary. Similar notifications in other states enjoy overwhelming support from their medical communities and have reduced “doctor shopping” by up to 65%, allowing practitioners to devote their time to legitimate patient care.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE, GO TO:

Partnership for a Drug-Free America
www.drugfree.org

Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services
www.samhsa.gov

National Institute on Drug Abuse
www.drugabuse.gov



New York State Department of Health