

Prescription Drug Abuse

By Suze Hargraves

Prescription drug abuse is a national epidemic. It's more common in ages 12 to 17 than the use of crack/cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine (speed), or ecstasy. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that during the years 2001 and 2007 our country experienced an increase of 200% in deaths from overdose of prescription drugs. The United States Department of Justice reports that "a majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, including from the home medicine cabinet." Are you seeing what I'm seeing here? An astronomical percent of the drugs hitting our streets and killing our citizens aren't coming from some far away country or a ruthless drug cartel. They're coming from our homes.

For your reference, here is a list of the most commonly abused prescription drugs courtesy of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (www.nida.nih.gov):

Oxycodone (OxyContin, Percodan, Percocet)

Propoxyphene (Darvon)

Hydrocodone (Vicodin, Lortab, Lorcet)

Hydromorphone (Dilaudid)

Meperidine (Demerol)

Diphenoxylate (Lomotil)

Morphine (Kadian, Avinza, MS Contin)

Codeine, Fentanyl (Duragesic)

Methadone, Mephobarbital (Mebaral)

Pentobarbital sodium (Nembutal)

Diazepam (Valium)

Chlordiazepoxide hydrochloride (Librium)

Alprazolam (Xanax), Triazolam (Halcion)

Estazolam (ProSom)

Clonazepam (Klonopin)

Lorazepam (Ativan)

Dextroamphetamine (Dexedrine and Adderall)

Methylphenidate (Ritalin and Concerta)

How do these drugs get onto our streets? Start with prescriptions left in the back of medicine cabinets or tucked away in the back of a drawer. Would you know if someone took them? Probably not, because you didn't remember they were there. Professional thieves and addicts will find out who takes what by hovering around pharmacy counters, listening for the right drugs to be named. They will even pick through trash looking for old pill bottles, identify you and your information, including your refill schedule and know where to strike to get what they want.

You can take steps to help keep these drugs off our streets and protect your home, family and our environment. Keep medications under lock and key and make sure, when you are pickup up drugs at the pharmacy that your information and privacy are protected. Dispose of medications properly. Don't flush drugs down the drain unless the label or literature tells you to do so. Scratch off labels before disposing of old pill bottles. Dispose of drugs by mixing them with things like used kitty litter, coffee grounds or other undesirable substances. If you have questions about how to dispose of a drug call your pharmacist or visit www.fda.gov for more information.

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