

Prescription Fraud and Abuse

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Health and Behavior

Prescription drugs find place in teen culture

Updated 6/13/2006 7:40 PM ET

By Donna Leimwand, USA TODAY

When a teenager in Jan Sigerson's office mentioned a "pharm party" in February, Sigerson thought the youth was talking about a keg party out on a farm.

"Pharm" it turned out, was short for pharmaceuticals, such as the powerful painkillers Vicodin and OxyContin, Sigerson, program director for Journeys, a teen drug treatment program in Omaha, soon learned that area youths were organizing parties to down fistfuls of prescription drugs. Since February, several more youths at Journeys have mentioned that they attended pharm parties, Sigerson says.

"When you start to see a pattern, you know it's becoming pretty widespread," she says. "I expect it to get worse before it gets better."

Drug counselors across the USA are beginning to hear about similar pill-popping parties, which are part of a rapidly developing underground culture that surrounds the rising abuse of prescription drugs by teens and young adults.

It's a culture with its own lingo: Bowls and baggies of random pills often are called "trail mix," and on internet chat sites, collecting pills from the family medicine chest is called "pharming."

Carol Falkowski, director of research communications for the Hazelden Foundation, says young abusers of prescription drugs also have begun using the internet to share "recipes" for getting high. Some websites are so simplistic, she says, that they refer to pills by color, rather than their brand name or content or potency.

That, Falkowski says, could help explain why emergency rooms are reporting that teens and young adults increasingly are showing up overdosed on bizarre and potentially lethal combinations of pills.

Source: Monitoring the Future survey by the University of Michigan

TEEN DRUG USE SHIFTS

Percentage of 12th-graders who said they had used certain drugs in the previous year:

Drug	2002	2005
Marijuana	36.2%	33.6%
Cocaine	5.0	5.1
Ecstasy	7.4	3.0
OxyContin	4.0	5.5
Vicodin	9.8	9.5

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'An epidemic': Pharmacy robberies sweeping US

Desperate addicts, ruthless dealers turn to violence to feed growing hunger for painkillers

By CHRIS HAWLEY
NBC News and news services
Updated 6/25/2011 6:36:10 PM ET

NEW YORK — A wave of pharmacy robberies is sweeping the United States as desperate addicts and ruthless dealers turn to violence to feed the nation's growing hunger for narcotic painkillers.

From Redmond, Wash., to St. Augustine, Fla., criminals are holding pharmacists at gunpoint and escaping with thousands of powerfully addictive pills that can sell for as much as \$80 apiece on the street.

In one of the most shocking crimes yet, a robber walked into a neighborhood drugstore Sunday on New York's Long Island and

People bring flowers to Haven Drugs pharmacy weekend painkiller robbery in Medford, N.Y.

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NEWS

Bennet Introduces Bill Targeting Rx Drug Robbers

September 28, 2011 11:00 PM

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DENVER (CBS4) - Some pharmacies in Colorado are hiring armed security because of soaring prescription drug thefts.

Sen. Michael Bennet has introduced a new plan to crack down on what he calls an epidemic. The bill would increase penalties for prescription drug thefts.

The penalty for stealing a controlled substance is the same as stealing a CD, as little as one year in prison.

In the past year in Denver, there have been 32 pharmacy robberies, that's an average of more than three each month.

At Co... Jones hired armed security after he was

OxyContin (oxycodone hydrochloride controlled-release tablets) 20 mg

OxyContin (oxycodone controlled-release tablets) 40 mg

Filed Under: Health, Local, News, Politics, Syndicated Local

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Tucson Citizen.com

ARIZONA NEWS FROM THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

2 Phoenix men arrested in prescription-drug robbery in Scottsdale

by Lisa Kennell on Sep. 23, 2011, under Arizona Republic News

Two Phoenix men were arrested on suspicion of robbing a woman outside of the Apothecary Shop in Scottsdale on Thursday, Scottsdale police said Friday.

About 1:30 p.m., a 54-year-old Chandler resident was outside of the pharmacy, 9777 N. 91st St., when two men grabbed a bag containing her prescriptions and fled in a gray Ford truck, police said.

Police found the truck driving through a parking lot at 92nd Street and Shea Boulevard shortly after the robbery.

Rubino Maximiliano Bennito Francisco, 23, was arrested after he ran from the truck, police said.

Douglas Jay Franklin, 36, drove the truck until he was arrested at a traffic stop on the southbound Loop 101 and Chaparral Road, police said.

Rx drug related robberies increasing, says Drug Enforcement Agency

On behalf of The Law Firm of Frank Stanley, PC posted in Felonies on Monday, June 27, 2011

According to the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, the demand for prescription drugs has caused an increase in the number of armed robberies of pharmacies and residential drugstores. According to the department, the number of serious felonies rose nearly 81 percent in the four years between 2006 and 2010.

OxyContin, Roxicodone, Vicodin and Norco are some of the drugs that are being taken. In fact, approximately 1.3 million prescription pain pills were taken in 2010, a number that increased from 706,000 in 2006.

According to the president of Physicians for Responsible Opioid Prescribing said while discussing the phenomenon that "people with addiction who could be perfectly good people will do all sorts of horrible things to maintain their supply."

Patients who are legally prescribed painkillers after suffering a serious accident cannot predict whether or not their body will become addicted to the medication. They can become addicted through no fault of their own yet once the prescription expires, it becomes a crime to possess the drugs that their body demands.

Addiction can overcome the will of the average person and drive them into situations they never expected they would be in. One Army veteran was arrested for after he attempted to obtain drugs for his wife who had extensive surgery approximately a year prior to the incident.

The veteran had lost his job as a warehouse worker and could not afford to pay for the drugs his wife badly needed. During the pharmacy robbery, the situation got out of control and the pharmacist was shot. The Army veteran now faces serious consequences he never thought imaginable.

Source: The Associated Press, "AP Enterprise: Pharmacy robberies sweeping US," Chris Hawley, 26 June 2011

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Report on Medicare Cites Prescription Drug Abuse

By ROBERT PEAR
Published: October 3, 2011

WASHINGTON — Medicare is subsidizing drug abuse by thousands of beneficiaries who shop around for doctors and fill prescriptions for huge quantities of painkillers and other narcotics far exceeding what any patient could safely use, Congressional investigators say in a new report.

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abused, said Gregory D. Kutz, director of forensic audits and special investigations at the accounting office.

The medications were obtained through Part D of Medicare, which provides coverage for prescription drugs. The drugs most commonly abused by Medicare beneficiaries included powerful prescription painkillers like oxycodones and hydrocodone products. Oxycodones include OxyContin and Percocet.

The investigators, from the [Government Accountability Office](#), said Medicare officials had been slow to recognize and act on the evidence of abuse, which is to be presented at a Senate hearing on Tuesday.

“Our analysis found that about 170,000 Medicare beneficiaries received prescriptions from five or more medical practitioners” for 14 types of drugs that are frequently

In one case described in the report, a Medicare beneficiary in Georgia received a 150-day supply of oxycodone in just 27 days by obtaining seven prescriptions from four doctors. Over the course of a year, the woman received prescriptions for a total of 3,655 oxycodone pills (a 1,679-day supply) from 58 different prescribers, and she filled them at more than 40 pharmacies.

In another case, a California man received prescriptions for a total of 1,397 fentanyl patches and pills (a 1,758-day supply) from 21 different prescribers in a year. In a third case, a Texas beneficiary received prescriptions for a total of 4,574 hydrocodone pills (a 994-day supply) from 25 different doctors.

Project Origin

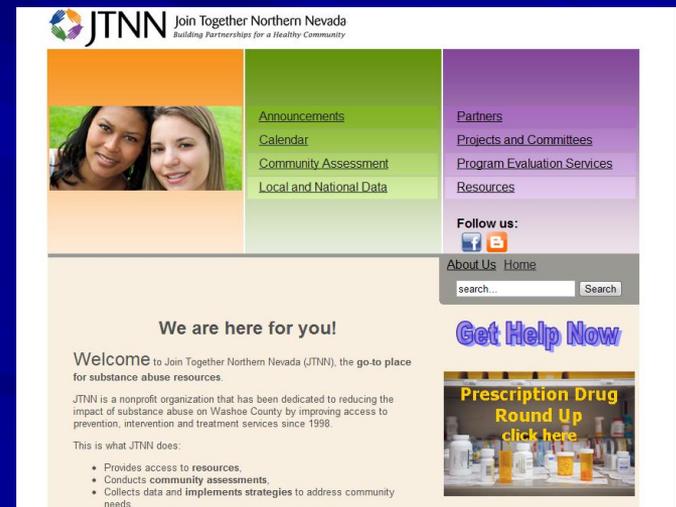
■ January 2009

- Local 15 year old, Austin Jones, died of methadone overdose

■ June 2009

- Reno P.D. meets with Join Together Northern Nevada (JTNN) to discuss a strategy for preventing prescription abuse by teens

- Collection of Prescription Drug Seizure Data



Project Origin (Cont'd)

- BJA's Smart Policing Grant
- Grant Awarded in 2010
- Seeks Innovative Approaches
- Partnerships are Key
- Organizational Changes

Nature of Problem

1. Overprescribing of legitimate pills
2. Doctor Shopping for illegitimate pills
3. Script forgery / pharmacy fraud for illegitimate pills
4. Violent crimes against pharmacies
5. Residential burglaries for pills
6. Street drug markets

Analysis

Rx Fraud Suspect
Doctor
Youth



Home
Doctor's office
Pharmacy
Street

Doctor
Pharmacy
Family Member
Youth

ANALYSIS

- Difficult to find data on problem
- Anecdotal / News stories
- Small numbers
 - School police does not keep numbers
 - Local police has no systematic manner to code information
- Many of initial interventions were used to collect information on PDA problem
(Medical community surveys, student surveys, etc.)

Analysis

- “Have you been personally trained to recognize drug seeking behaviors of customers/patients?”
Pharmacists: 55.3% No Doctors: 73.7% No
- “Do you think pharmacists/doctors in general are adequately trained to recognize drug seeking behaviors?”
Pharmacists: 54.3% No Doctors: 78.9% No
- “Do you think there are adequate legal outlets/resources to report drug seeking customers?”
Pharmacists: 38.8% No Doctors: 83.3% No

Analysis

- “How often do you experience drug seeking customers?”

65.5% of Pharmacists and 53% of Doctors reported “weekly” or “daily”

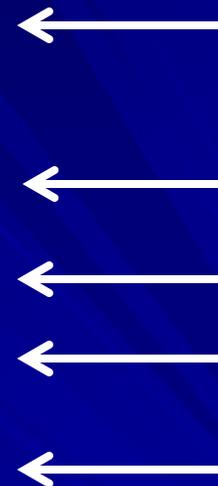
- “Do you think law enforcement agencies are doing enough to prevent prescription drug abuse?”

Pharmacists: 59.4% No

Doctors: 64.7% No

Some numbers...

977	LAS VEGAS	NV	89121	5	NA	CODEINE/PROMETHAZINE HCL	10-6.25/5	280.
977	LAS VEGAS	NV	89121	3	Pain Reliever	HYDROCODONE	5MG-500MG	27.
977	LAS VEGAS	NV	89121	3	Pain Reliever	HYDROCODONE	7.5-500MG	27.
977	LAS VEGAS	NV	89121	2	Pain Reliever	OXYCODONE HCL/ACETAMINOPHEN	10MG-325MG	15.
977	LAS VEGAS	NV	89121	2	Pain Reliever	OXYCODONE HCL/ACETAMINOPHEN	7.5-325MG	30.
555	MINDEN	NV	89423	4	Sedative	TEMAZEPAM	30MG	30.
880	LAS VEGAS	NV	89120	3	Pain Reliever	HYDROCODONE	10MG-500MG	100.
271	LAS VEGAS	NV	89109	4	Stimulant	MODAFINIL	100MG	60.
020	NORTH LAS	NV	89030	4	Tranquilizer	ALPRAZOLAM	0.25MG	21.
020	NORTH LAS	NV	89030	5	NA	CODEINE/PROMETHAZINE HCL	10-6.25/5	150.
020	NORTH LAS	NV	89030	3	Pain Reliever	HYDROCODONE	10MG-325MG	36.
020	NORTH LAS	NV	89030	3	Pain Reliever	HYDROCODONE	5MG-325MG	10.
279	HENDERSON	NV	89052	3	Pain Reliever	HYDROCODONE	7.5-500MG	120.
279	HENDERSON	NV	89052	2	Pain Reliever	OXYCODONE HCL/ACETAMINOPHEN	5MG-325MG	90.
291	LAS VEGAS	NV	89101	4	Tranquilizer	ALPRAZOLAM	0.5MG	30.
0280	RENO	NV	89523	2	Pain Reliever	OXYCODONE HCL/ACETAMINOPHEN	5MG-325MG	30.
2148	LAS VEGAS	NV	89128	0	NA	CARISOPRODOL	350MG	90.
2148	LAS VEGAS	NV	89128	3	Pain Reliever	HYDROCODONE	10MG-500MG	480.
2148	LAS VEGAS	NV	89128	3	Pain Reliever	HYDROCODONE	5MG-325MG	90.
880	LAS VEGAS	NV	89149	5	NA	CODEINE/PROMETHAZINE HCL	10-6.25/5	100.
5280	HENDERSON	NV	89014	4	Tranquilizer	ALPRAZOLAM	1MG	60.
5280	HENDERSON	NV	89014	4	Tranquilizer	DIAZEPAM	10MG	60.
0367	RENO	NV	89503	3	Pain Reliever	HYDROCODONE	5MG-325MG	15.
314	RENO	NV	89503	3	Pain Reliever	HYDROCODONE	5MG-325MG	15.
185	LAS VEGAS	NV	89118	4	Stimulant	PHENTERMINE HCL	37.5MG	30.
1530	LAS VEGAS	NV	89107	5	Pain Reliever	ACETAMINOPHEN WITH CODEINE	120-12MG/5	40.
1530	LAS VEGAS	NV	89107	4	Tranquilizer	DIAZEPAM	5MG	12.
1530	LAS VEGAS	NV	89107	3	Pain Reliever	HYDROCODONE	5MG-500MG	60.
1530	LAS VEGAS	NV	89107	3	Pain	HYDROCODONE	7.5-500MG	20.
1530	LAS VEGAS	NV	89107	4	Tranquilizer	LORAZEPAM	1MG	10.



On a random weekend day in September, there were 4,133 scripts filled, resulting in 253, 376 pills being dispensed.

What does one day produce?

1611 Doctors filled 4133 scripts

→ 6% of these were involved in almost 25% cases

→ Almost 65% of scripts dispensed between 30 – 120 pills

→ Breakdown by Pill Type

Drug Type		
	Frequency	Percent
Pain Reliever	1512	43.4
Tranquilizer	815	23.4
Sedative	532	15.3
NA	391	11.2
Stimulant	209	6
Pain	20	0.6
	4	0.1
Total	3483	100

Analysis of Law Enforcement

- Incidents rarely coded properly by officers
- Little hierarchical importance in crime reporting
- Little link seen between PDA and street drug markets
- Simple lack of code in MIS
 - (Given size of PDA problem, departments should really consider this small organizational change)

Responses

- 1) Educate health care professionals and the public about prescription drug abuse/diversion
- 2) Decrease the availability of prescription drugs for abuse
 - In homes & on the street
- 3) Increase enforcement of prescription fraud and diversion laws

Response

- Education of stakeholders:
 - Healthcare
 - Pharmacists, doctors, dentists
 - Patients/public
 - Pharmacy bag stickers
 - Parent video
 - Teens
 - Teen video shown in schools
 - Available on SPI website:
<http://www.smartpolicinginitiative.com/SPIsites/reno>

Response: Educating the Public

- Pharmacy bag sticker campaign
 - “P.A.S.S. It On” pharmacy bag stickers
 - Over 120,000 stickers dispensed to date

P.A.S.S. It On!

Proper disposal of old/unused medications
For information on the next Prescription Drug Round Up, visit Join Together Northern Nevada at www.jtnn.org

Awareness of prescription abuse
Nearly 1 in 5 teens has abused prescription medications
Abuse of prescription drugs can be **addictive and fatal**

Secure storage of prescription medications
Keep them in a locked location, out of the hands of those who could abuse them

Safety for children and teens
Talk to your loved ones about the dangers of abusing prescription and over-the-counter drugs

Response: Educating Healthcare

- Continuing education credits are crucial
 - Partner with medical/pharmacy/dental boards
- Provide lunch or dinner if possible
- Use well-qualified speakers
 - Must be respected by the audience

Response: Reducing Availability

■ Prescription Drug Round Ups

- Semi-annual
- Grocery stores with pharmacies & heavy traffic
 - Convenience is important
- Logging of pills collected, for data purposes
 - Pharmacist/tech volunteers
- Provide results to media after the event
- “Lock boxes” offered to parents

Prescription Drug Round Up

The next Round Up will be held on **Saturday, October 1 from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.** at the following locations:

SaveMart - 565 East Prater Way, Sparks
Scolari's - 1300 Disc Dr., Sparks
Scolari's - 8165 S. Virginia St., Reno
Smith's - 175 Lemmon Drive, Reno
Walgreens - 10370 N. McCarran Blvd., Reno
Walmart - 4855 Kietzke Lane, Reno

And on **Saturday, October 29 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.** at the following locations:

SaveMart - 565 East Prater Way, Sparks
Scolari's - 8165 S. Virginia St., Reno

WHAT IS THE ROUND UP?

It's a safe place to dispose of expired, unwanted prescription drugs.

WHY?

Rates of prescription drug abuse are increasing throughout the country, and studies show that a majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends. The community is safer without unneeded prescription drugs in your medicine cabinet with the potential for abuse by young children or others. Proper disposal of unused medicines is a public health issue since the environment can become polluted by medicines that are thrown away or flushed down toilets.

WHAT CAN I BRING?

Unused/expired prescription medications, nonprescription pills, and prescription liquids in the original container. Feel free to remove any personal identification from the container.

WHAT IF I CAN'T ATTEND?

If you're not able to make it to the Drug Round Up, please click [here](#) to learn safe disposal methods for prescription drugs.

WHAT IF I STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?

Call us at 775-324-7557.

Prescription Drug Round Up



- 5 events held to date
- Over 555,000 pills collected and destroyed

Response: Enforcement

- Increase reporting by pharmacists/doctors
 - New fraud alert system
 - In-person visits to pharmacies, doctors' offices
- Officer training on proper investigation of Rx diversion/fraud cases

Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PMP)

- Doctors and pharmacists need training on how and why to use it
- Can be a valuable resource for data
 - Tracking of trends and patterns over time
 - Identification of repeat offenders:
 - Doctor shoppers
 - Over-prescribing doctors

Ongoing Efforts

- Regular prescription drug collection
 - Drop boxes at police stations
- Targeted education:
 - Doctors
 - Parents
 - Other stakeholders?
- Examining Trends using PMP data

Some Issues:

Kitchen Sink Approach

- Evaluations are more difficult
- Need balance between problem reduction and intervention effectiveness

Not all stakeholders are good “players”

- Sensitive data problem / patients need their meds
- Pharmaceutical industry
- Retailers fear losing money/customers
- Mixture of healthcare / policing / drug markets

Questions/Contact

- Lieutenant Mac Venzon, Reno P.D.
(775) 334-3064 venzonb@reno.gov
- Dr. Emmanuel Barthe, UNR
(775) 784-6334 epbarthe@unr.edu

Smart Policing Initiative website – Reno page:
<http://www.smartpolicinginitiative.com/SPIsites/reno>