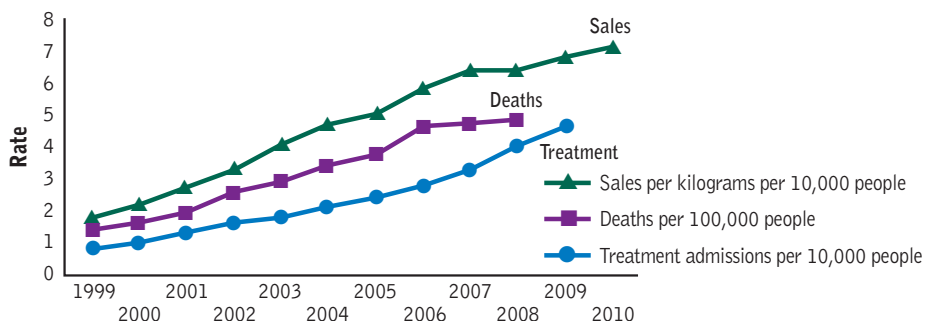


RIA Reaching Others: Prescription Drug Abuse

Q: What do pain killers, tranquilizers, and stimulant medications all have in common?

A: Although prescribed legally by physicians, these three very different types of drugs are the most commonly abused classes of prescription drugs. Their abuse and the consequences of their abuse – treatment admissions, ER visits, and overdose deaths – have increased to an epidemic.

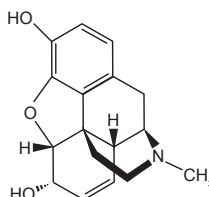
Rates of Prescription Painkiller Sales, Deaths and Treatment Admissions



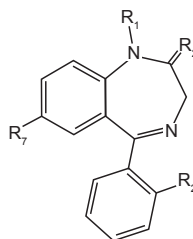
SOURCE: CDC Vital Signs: Prescription Painkiller Overdoses in the US (Nov 2011)

The commonly abused prescription drugs fall into three classes:

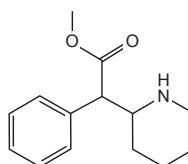
⊖ **Opioids** are prescription pain medications including Vicodin (hydrocodone), OxyContin and Percocet (oxycodone), morphine, Methadose (methadone), and codeine. Taken as prescribed, they are effective and safe pain management tools. Abuse of opioids, however, can lead to physical dependence and addiction.



⊖ **Central nervous system depressants** – sedatives and tranquilizers – include drugs that slow brain activity, such as Valium, Xanax and Halcion (benzodiazepines), Ambien, Lunesta and Sonata (non-benzodiazepine sleep medications), and Luminal Sodium, Nembutal and Mebaral (barbiturates). Although these medications can be safely and effectively used under a physician’s supervision, they are easily misused and can lead to addiction.



⊖ **Stimulants** increase attention, energy, focus, and alertness and are used as a treatment for attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). These medications, such as Adderall, Concerta, Ritalin, have been misused and abused to try to improve cognitive performance, posing health risks including addiction.



Prescription drug abuse is:



- ❖ the use of a medication without a physician’s prescription;
- ❖ the use of a medication other than how it was prescribed; or
- ❖ the use of a medication for the experience or feeling that the drug causes.

Prescription drug abuse knows no age boundaries – it has been increasing among adolescents, college students, adults, and the elderly over the last 15 years.

But I thought these prescription drugs were safe?



They are....but only when prescribed by a physician and taken as prescribed by the person for whom the medication was prescribed. But when prescription drugs are abused (see above), they are dangerous, addictive, and withdrawal can be deadly.

Legislation

To address the growing problem of prescription medication abuse and misuse, lawmakers have drafted and signed into law two pieces of recent legislation – one in New York State and the second, sponsored by U.S. Senator Schumer of New York, at the federal level.



In September 2012, the new **I-STOP legislation** was signed into law by New York State Governor Cuomo in an effort to curb the epidemic of prescription drug abuse.

The I-STOP Law:

- ⊖ decreases opportunities for “doctor shopping” to illegally obtain prescriptions from multiple practitioners;
- ⊖ mandates electronic prescribing to ensure safe and secure transmission from physician to pharmacist;
- ⊖ updates the Controlled Substance Schedules, improving safeguards for specific prescription drugs;
- ⊖ increases education for health care providers about prescription drug abuse; and
- ⊖ requires that a safe disposal system for controlled substances be developed.

Attorney General Eric Schneiderman stated that “I-STOP will be a national model for smart, coordinated communication between health care providers and law enforcement to better serve patients, stop prescription drug trafficking, and provide treatment to those who need help.”

In October 2012, President Obama signed into law U.S. Senator Charles Schumer’s (D-NY) plan to combat prescription drug theft – **the SAFE DOSES Act**.

The SAFE DOSES Act targets drug theft at every point of the supply chain, increasing sentences for robbing pharmacies, creating a new category of crime dealing with theft of medical products and increasing sentences for individuals in the medical field who are convicted of prescription drug theft.

For more information

<http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/prescription-drugs>

<http://www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/commonly-abused-drugs/commonly-abused-prescription-drugs-chart>

<http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/MethadoneOverdoses/>

<http://www.schumer.senate.gov/Newsroom/record.cfm?id=337770>

<http://www.nysenate.gov/press-release/new-i-stop-law-help-state-fight-prescription-drug-abuse>



Treatment of Prescription Drug Abuse

Name _____

Date _____

R Research has shown that treatment of drug addiction, including prescription drugs, can be effective. Treatment and on-going support may include:

- ✓ Detoxification
- ✓ Outpatient counseling
- ✓ Inpatient treatment
- ✓ Addiction medications
- ✓ Self-help groups

Signature _____

Refill 1 2 3 4 5 6 NR