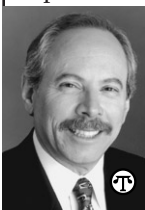


Prescription Drugs: Misuse Won't Cure What Ails You

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(NAPSA)—Recent nationwide publicity about arrests and overdose deaths of people misusing painkillers and other prescription drugs highlights the increasing abuse of these drugs.

Although prescription drugs improve the lives of millions of Americans, some of these drugs—opioids, sedatives, and stimulants—can also be dangerous and addicting.



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Opioids, sometimes referred to as narcotics such as morphine, codeine, oxycodone (OxyContin®), and hydrocodone (Vicodin®), ease patients' pain.

Sedatives, or central nervous system depressants, including barbiturates and benzodiazepines, are used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders.

Stimulants are prescribed for narcolepsy, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and obesity.

Abuse of these types of prescription drugs can lead, in some cases, to dependence and possibly to addiction. The latest figures show that in 1999 more than four million Americans—almost two percent of the population aged 12 and older—were currently using prescription opioids, sedatives, tranquilizers, and stimulants for non-medical reasons.

To bring attention to this serious public health problem, the



National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and several organizations representing the pharmaceutical industry, pharmacists, family physicians, and drug stores, as well as AARP and the National Council on Patient Information and Education, are launching a public education initiative on the misuse, abuse, and addiction of prescription drugs.

Reports of misuse of prescription drugs in older adults, adolescents, and women are worrisome. Older Americans take prescription medicines three times as often as the rest of us, yet the elderly are least likely to use their medications correctly.

The number of new prescription drug abusers has increased among young people between 12-25 years old. In the same 1999 survey, 12-

14 year olds named psychotherapeutics such as painkillers, sedatives, and stimulants as drugs they used frequently.

Overall, adult men and women use prescription drugs non-medically in equal numbers. However, some studies suggest that women may be more likely to be prescribed an abusable prescription drug.

Health care providers, pharmacists, and patients all play a role in preventing prescription drug misuse and abuse.

Doctors should ensure that patients understand how to use prescribed medications and should also be alert to signs of patient drug abuse.

Pharmacists can help by clearly telling patients how to take a medication, as well as explaining side effects and potential drug interactions.

Patients should make sure they know how to use their medication, ask questions about their prescriptions, and read the printed information provided by the pharmacist. Patients should always talk to their doctor or pharmacist before increasing, decreasing, or stopping any medication.

While it's important to remember that prescription drugs can relieve a variety of medical problems, these same drugs can be dangerous—and even deadly—when misused or abused.

For more information, visit the National Institute on Drug Abuse's Web site at www.drugabuse.gov or call the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 1-800-729-6686.