

SEE YOUR DOCTOR

Diversion And Abuse Of Prescription Medication

(NAPSA)—Being cautious with prescription drugs can ensure that the more than 50 million Americans who suffer from chronic pain will get the help they need.

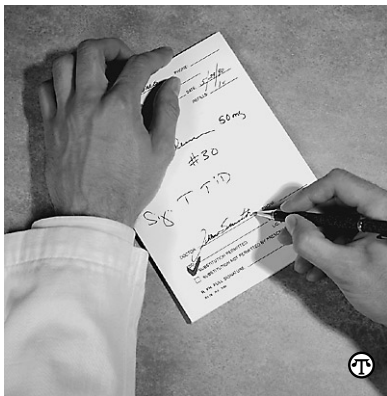
Chronic pain can have an impact on a person's ability to sleep, work, drive and participate in normal, daily activities.

For many patients, treatment of their pain may incorporate a multi-disciplinary approach that includes physical therapy, meditation, exercise, heat/ice and pain medication. Patients with moderate to severe chronic pain may require certain prescription pain medications. Examples of prescription pain medications include NSAIDs, COX-2 inhibitors, antidepressants, and opioid analgesics.

Although prescription medications can help relieve pain for the many people who use them appropriately, there are some people who abuse these substances, using them improperly to get "high." Taken to the extreme, drug abuse can become drug addiction, leading to compulsive drug seeking and use, and craving. When prescription medications designed to relieve pain are abused for non-medical reasons, they can even lead to death.

People generally assume that most drug abuse in the United States involves street drugs. However, a recent survey shows an estimated four million people aged 12 and older used prescription medications for non-medical reasons in 1999, nearly double the estimated number of Americans (2.1 million) who used heroin, cocaine or crack-cocaine. Almost half of the four million who abused prescription pain medications such as sedatives, stimulants, tranquilizers or opioids in 1999 said it was their first time.

Fear of drug abuse and diversion is a major concern of many health care professionals and many physicians are reluctant to prescribe certain pain medications for patients, even those with severe pain. Prescription pain medications are usually safe and effective when properly prescribed and used as directed. Failure to



Preventing prescription drug abuse can safeguard availability for the people who need them.

prescribe such medications may cause needless suffering for millions of patients.

The national magnitude of the drug abuse problem in the United States dictates that we make a meaningful effort to prevent diversion. By doing so, we safeguard the availability of these medications for patients whose function and quality of life depend upon them.

Since some pain medications may contain ingredients such as morphine, hydromorphone, methadone, hydrocodone or oxycodone, these medications should be kept out of the reach of children and protected from theft. When medication is no longer needed, it should be destroyed.

You should never sell or give your prescription medication to anyone, even to family members who may be experiencing pain. It is in their best interests to see their doctor to obtain a prescription for medication that is appropriate for their condition.

Partners Against Pain® (PAP) is a valuable resource for medical professionals and patients to learn more about pain management. Pain management tools are available free of charge at www.partnersagainstpain.com or by writing Partners Against Pain at One Stamford Forum, Department M, Stamford, Connecticut, 06901-3431. For additional information about pain management, consult with your doctor or a pain specialist.