Prescription Fraud and Abuse

Reno Police Department & University of Nevada, Reno

Smart Policing Initiative
Prescription drugs find place in teen culture

'An epidemic': Pharmacy robberies sweeping US

Bennet Introduces Bill Targeting Rx Drug Robbers

Rx drug related robberies increasing, says Drug Enforcement Agency

2 Phoenix men arrested in prescription-drug robbery in Scottsdale
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.

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 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.
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
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

Doctor's office
Pharmacy
Street

Offender
Target/victim
Place

Problem

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
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drug Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pain Reliever</td>
<td>1512</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tranquilizer</td>
<td>815</td>
<td>23.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sedative</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>15.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stimulant</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pain</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0.6</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3483</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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
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, non-prescription 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