

Doctor Shoppers

The term “doctor shoppers” describes the most common type of prescription drug fraud. These people visit multiple practitioners, usually physicians and dentists, attempting to receive a prescription for a pharmaceutical drug of abuse. The practitioners are unaware of the activity, and do not know they are likely feeding someone’s addiction to prescription drugs.

Doctor shoppers may have an addiction of their own, they may obtain the drugs strictly for resale, or a combination of both may be involved. Doctor shopping can also develop from legitimate patients who find that they have developed a dependence or addiction to the drugs long after they need them for pain relief.

A typical doctor shopper may be seeing as many as 5-10 practitioners at the same time. In addition to the drug problem, a significant portion of this activity is accomplished through health care fraud. Therefore, Medicaid, Worker’s Compensation, or private insurance ends up financing this illegal drug activity. This expense is then passed on to legitimate patients through higher insurance premiums.

Ohio Prescription Drug Crimes

It is important to know that the vast majority of prescription drug crimes in Ohio are felonies, making abusers subject to possible penitentiary sentences. In addition to selling prescription drugs, the act of doctor shopping, forging or altering prescriptions, and various other pharmaceutical scams are serious felonies in Ohio and other states.

One dangerous activity is for people to give or exchange their prescription drugs with friends or family members. This activity is not only physically dangerous, but legally is the same felony offense as selling your drugs to another.



**TO REPORT ILLEGAL
DRUG ABUSE, SALES OR
MANUFACTURING,
CONTACT YOUR
LOCAL LAW
ENFORCEMENT
AGENCY
OR
TASK FORCE**



PRESCRIPTION DRUG AWARENESS



*Leading the
Ohio Law
Enforcement
Task Forces
to higher
levels of
professionalism
and innovation.*



Prescription Stimulants

Prescription stimulants are primarily used for the treatment of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). Primarily prescribed to school-aged children and adolescents, these drugs can also be abused.



Methylphenidate, the primary active ingredient in Ritalin®, is somewhat similar to cocaine. In

fact, those people abusing methylphenidate are likely to snort the drug through a straw, just like cocaine. The drug has been very popular among students, truck drivers, and anyone desiring a stimulant-type “high”.



Amphetamine Mixture is the generic drug found in Adderall®, also a stimulant that can be used much like methylphenidate. Both drugs can generate a street value of between \$10-\$15 per pill.

Prescription Benzodiazepines

Benzodiazepines are the technical term for prescription drugs that are prescribed primarily for anxiety related disorders. Sometimes termed tranquilizers, these prescription drugs also can be heavily abused.



Alprazolam, the generic name for Xanax®, and diazepam, also known as Valium®, are the two most popular drugs of abuse in this class. These drugs are consumed orally, with addiction rates that can reach 30 pills per day in some cases.



Both substances are commonly combined with other prescription drugs, and alcohol, to create a more

substantial “high”. Average street values for alprazolam and diazepam are between \$1 and \$3 per pill.

Scope of the Problem

The abuse and diversion of prescription drugs is nothing new, although it has gained a considerable amount of attention in the past two years. It is estimated that 25-30% of the overall drug problem involves prescription drugs, and that it stands only second to marijuana abuse.

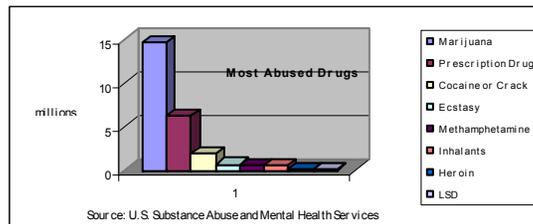


The latest government national household survey indicated that 6.2 million people abused prescription drugs last year. In addition, a sharp increase was seen in prescription drug abuse among the 12-17 year olds. This increase appears to be from the fact that teenagers are finding these drugs in their relatives’ medicine cabinets, being prescribed them legitimately at a younger age, and purchase the pharmaceuticals over the Internet.

Dangers of Prescription Drug Abuse

Those abusing prescription drugs have virtually the same propensity for impairment, dependence, addiction, and even death, as the illicit drugs. There is a common misconception that since a doctor prescribes these drugs, and a pharmacist dispenses them, the drugs can’t be bad for you. However, in several states prescription drug overdose deaths exceed that of common street drugs like cocaine and heroin.

The following prescription drug categories are by no means inclusive of all pharmaceutical drugs being abused, but are meant to provide the reader with a thumbnail sketch of the most abused prescription substances.



Prescription Opiates

One of the most abused prescription drug classes falls within the opiates. Opiates can be natural, like codeine and morphine, or synthetic like oxycodone and hydrocodone. Opiates, when used legitimately, are designed primarily to provide pain relief.

Opiates are abused by swallowing the pill whole, or in some cases, by crushing the pill into a powder form, and injecting or snorting the drug directly into the body. The most hardened abuser can consume 50-75 pills per day, and more, in more extreme cases.



Hydrocodone products are by far the most abused prescription drugs. Hydrocodone is the generic name for Vicodin®, Lortab®, and Lorcet®. Hydrocodone is almost always abused orally, and may be taken in conjunction with other prescription or illicit substances. Average street values of hydrocodone are usually between \$4-\$6 per pill.

Oxycodone products are the second most abused in the prescription opiate family, and include brand name drugs like Percodan®, Percocet®, Tylox®, and OxyContin®. Oxycodone products are considered a more potent opiate, and are illegally consumed in a variety of ways; including snorting and injecting the substance. Average street values range between \$4-\$8 per pill, and \$.50-\$1.00 per milligram for OxyContin®.



Oxycontin in 10, 20, 40, and 80 milligrams