Nature & Trends of Prescription (Rx) and Over-the-Counter (OTC) Drug Misuse Among Youth

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Integrated Substance Abuse Programs

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The Good News…

Monitoring the Future Study; Past Month Use for 12th Graders
Every Generation of Teens Looks for New Ways to Get “High”
The Bad News…
Teen “getting high” using Rx or OTC drugs

Generation
“Pharming”
Today's teens are more likely to have abused Rx and OTC drugs than most illicit drugs.

Every day 2,500 teens 12 - 17 try a painkiller for the 1st time.

Rx drugs are the “drugs of choice” for 12 & 13 yr olds.

NSDUH, 2006; MTF, 2006
Epidemiology of Rx and OTC Drug Misuse Among Youth
New Landscape of Drug Abuse among Teens

- Marijuana: 8.6 million
- Prescription Medicine: 4.5 million
- Cough Medicine: 2.4 million
- Crack/Cocaine: 2.4 million
- Ecstasy: 1.9 million
- Meth: 1.9 million
- LSD: 1.3 million
- Heroin: 1.1 million
- Ketamine: 1 million
- GHB: 1 million

NSDUH, 2006; MTF, 2006
Commonly Misused Rx Drugs

Classified in 3 classes

- **Opiates: pain-killers**
  - Ex) Vicodin, Oxycontin, Tylenol Codeine

- **CNS Depressants**
  (Sedatives/Tranquilizers): treat anxiety and sleep disorders
  - Ex) Xanax, Ativan, Valium, Soma

- **Stimulants: ADHD, weight loss**
  - Ex) Aderall, Ritalin, Concerta, Dexedrine, Fastin
OTC Medicine Abuse

• Dextromethorphan DXM (narcotic codeine) is the active ingredient in over 100 cold/cough remedies.

• Found in tablets, capsules, gel caps, lozenges & syrups, teens discovered: using mass quantities of DXM-containing products get them “high”.

[Images of pills and syrup]
Examples of Popular OTC Products

- Coricidin HBP Cough & Cold
- Robitussin Cough products
- Sudafed Cough medicines
- Dimetapp DM
- Tylenol Cold products
- Vicks 44 Cough Relief
- Vicks NyQuil and Dayquil
- Triaminic Cough syrups
- Alka-Seltzer Plus Cold & Cough
Top 5 Drugs Used by 12th Graders

- Marijuana: 31.5%
- Vicodin: 9.7%
- Oxycontin: 5.5%
- Amphetamines: 7.5%
- OTC Cough/Cold Meds: 6.9%
- Sedatives/Tranqs: 6.6%

SOURCE: MTF, 2006
OTC Medications Misused by Teens

3 million misused OTC ever and 1 million in past year

SOURCE: MTF, 2006
Recent studies have highlighted medicine abuse—both Rx and OTC—as alarming trends among:

- Adolescents 12-17
- Young Adults 18-25
- Teen Females
Extent of Rx and OTC Drug Abuse among Youth in California
Use of Rx drugs by CA Adolescents

Taking painkillers without a prescription:
✓ 15% of 11th graders
✓ 9% of 9th graders
✓ 4% of 7th graders

California Student Survey 05/06
Los Angeles

- Sales sharply increased for **oxycodone** (84%) and **hydrocodone** (47%) between 2001 and 2005.

- **Codeine, hydrocodone, and morphine** were distributed in the **largest amounts** when compared with the grams of other opiates distributed.

CEWG, 2006
The Pharming Subculture: Generation Rx

Risk Factors
Reasons Teens Abuse Rx & OTC Drugs

✓ Social - Pharm Parties
✓ Legal - Widely Available
✓ Easily Accessible - Online
✓ Affordable: Low Cost/Free
✓ Prescribed - Safe
✓ Medicine: Non-addictive

Partnership Attitude Tracking Survey (PAT): Released in April 2006 by The Partnership for a Drug-Free America
Recent Research: Why Teens Use?

- When teens abuse Rx drugs, they often characterize their use as “responsible” or “controlled” (Friedman, 2006).

- Teens admit to abusing Rx medicine for reasons other than getting high, including to relieve pain or anxiety, to sleep better, just to experiment, to help with concentration or to increase alertness. (Boyd, McCabe, Cranford & young, 2006).

- More than 1/3 of teens say they feel pressure to abuse Rx drugs and say using these drugs to get high is an important part of fitting in with their friends. (Seventeen, 2006).
Access & Availability

- The Home
- Retail Pharmacies
- The Internet
Social Networking Web Sites:

**Medicine Abuse Subculture**

- **MySpace**
  - Footage of teens “high”
- **YouTube**
  - User Guides: Rx & OTC abuse instructions (recipes)
- **LiveJournal**
- **Facebook**
  - Blogs & videos of experiences
Erowid: http://www.erowid.org
Teen Rx & OTC Drug Slang

✓ **Xbrs or xanabars**: anti-anxiety
   Xanax
✓ **Vic**: Vicodin
✓ **Skittles, Dex, Robo, Tussin, (any OTC cold pill containing DXM)**
✓ **Triple Cs or CCC**: Coricidin Cough & Cold
✓ **SIZ’zurp**: cough syrup & ETOH
✓ **Trail Mix**: Pharm Party

Keeping parents clueless
The Pharming Subculture:
Generation Rx

Consequences/Effects
Teens Don’t Understand the Risks & Effects of Abusing Rx and OTC Medicines

Over 50% believe that abusing these medicines to get high is NOT risky…

Join Together, 2006
The “High”

- Slurred speech
- Flushed skin, sweating
- Loss of appetite
- Mild distortions of color/sound
- Confusion, forgetfulness
- Clumsiness/loss of motor control
- Mood swings, irritability
- Excessive energy or sleepiness
The “Lows”

- Delusions
- Panic attacks
- Memory problems
- Blurred vision
- Stomach pain, nausea, vomiting
- High blood pressure & Rapid heart beat
- Numbness of fingers/toes
- Drowsiness & Dizziness
- Fever & headaches
- Rashes/itchy skin
- Loss of consciousness
Side effects can be Lethal if...

- Combining Rx drugs & OTC medications.
- Taking Rx and OTC meds with alcohol.
- Using Rx and OTC with other illicit drugs.
Rx & OTC Drug Over Doses

- **Last week:** Rapper Pimp C (Chad Butler): cough syrup & Hennessey – “sizerp”
- **Last Month:** Heath Ledger: lethal cocktail of Rx drugs - pain, sleeping, anti-anxiety
- **Last Year:** Anna Nicole Smith & Son (Daniel) both died due to Rx drugs
- **Last 1.5 years:** Rapper Ol’ Dirty Bastard: fatal mixture of Rx drugs and cocaine
Parents Don’t Know About Dangers & Risks

- Only 8% of parents are aware of Rx & OTC abuse.
- 75% don’t talk to their kids about the problem.
- Unaware that the drug supply can come from their own home.
Nor has it been on the radar screens of...

- Educators
- Policymakers
- Researchers
- Treatment providers
- Healthcare providers
- Law enforcement
Prevention Activities

- **ONDCLK**
  - 12 week national public awareness campaign
  - Began with 2 Ads aired during Super Bowl
  - 1st paid TV advertising targeting parents in 2 years.

- **DARE**
  - New School Curriculum Addresses Rx and OTC Drug Abuse

- **Five Moms Campaign**
  - Stopping Cough Medicine Abuse
Future Efforts

- Increased monitoring efforts at the state and local levels.

- Developing intervention strategies for Rx & OTC drug abuse in youth treatment settings.

- Statewide prescription drug workgroup/task force.
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