

American Drug Testing

Drug-Free Workplace Programs

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DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE ADVISOR

AN ONGOING SERIES TO PROTECT YOUR COMPANY BY HELPING TO KEEP DRUGS OUT OF YOUR WORK-

Fact Sheet: Abuse of Prescription Pain Killers, I

Most people who use prescription drugs take them under the care and advice of their physician. However, the non-medical use of prescription drugs is becoming an increasing public health concern. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, non-medical use of prescription drugs ranks second only to marijuana in illicit drug use



among adults and youth. The survey found that 6.2 million

Americans abused prescription drugs. Of these, more than 70 percent used painkillers, and research suggests that the abuse of prescriptions opioids is as pervasive as the use of cocaine and heroin combined. Among youth aged 12 to 17, nearly 14 percent have abused prescription drugs at least once in their lifetime, and nearly 12 percent have abused pain relievers. Among young

adults aged 18 to 25, the number who have abused prescription pain relievers at least once has risen to more than 22 percent.

“...when abused, they can be as addictive and dangerous as illegal drugs.”

“Many Americans benefit from the appropriate use of prescription painkillers, but when abused, they can be as addictive and dangerous as illegal drugs.” Tommy Thompson, Secretary of Health and Human Services
Commonly Abused Prescription Drugs

There are three classes of prescription drugs that are most commonly abused:

- Opioids, which are usually prescribed to treat pain;
- CNS depressants, which are used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders;
- Stimulants, which are prescribed to treat the sleep disorder narcolepsy, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and obesity.

Among those who abuse prescription drugs, the most commonly reported use was of prescription painkillers or opioids.

Opioids are commonly pre-

scribed because of their effectiveness in relieving pain. Medications that fall into this class—sometimes referred to as “narcotics”—include morphine, codeine, oxycodone (best-known by its trade name, OxyContin), propoxyphene (Darvon), hydrocodone (Vicodin), and hydromorphone (Dilaudid). Another drug, meperidine, most commonly known by its trade name Demerol, is used less often because of its side effects.

Common Opioids

Morphine—A naturally occurring substance derived from the seedpods of certain kinds of poppy plants, it is the principal component of heroin. Most morphine used for medical purposes is converted to codeine and other derivatives.

Heroin — A highly addictive illicit drug derived from morphine.

Codeine—Derived from morphine, it is the world’s most widely used narcotic for medical treatment.

Hydrocodone—A synthetic opioid, it has analgesic properties similar to or greater than oral morphine. Best-known under the trade name Vicodin.

Oxycodone—A synthetic opioid, most often prescribed for serious pain that

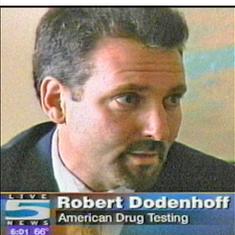
requires a time-release formula. Best-known under the trade name OxyContin. Of the prescription painkillers, **OxyContin** has received the most attention from the media and from policymakers. OxyContin is a trade name for the narcotic oxycodone hydrochloride (HCl). Oxycodone is a semi-synthetic opioid and produces effects similar to codeine, methadone and morphine.

Oxycodone is not just present in OxyContin—it is also the active ingredient in a number of other



commonly prescribed pain relief medications such as Percocet, Percodan and Tylox. Part II: Health Risks. Source: drugstory.org For additional information, see the “client area” at www.AmericanDrugTesting.net or call 843-747-4111.

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