

# Prescription Drug Abuse

Revised May 2008

*Misuse, abuse and diversion of prescription drugs are a threat to public health and safety*

## What does it mean for Oregon?

*One of every four adults in Oregon will abuse prescription drugs in their lifetime.*

Compared to the rest of the nation, Oregon ranks among the top ten states for:

- Annual abuse of prescription drugs for all ages (228,000 persons per year) <sup>1</sup>
- Past year abuse of prescription drugs by youth 12 to 17 (34,000 persons per year) <sup>1</sup>
- Past year abuse of prescription stimulants (55,000 persons per year) <sup>1</sup>

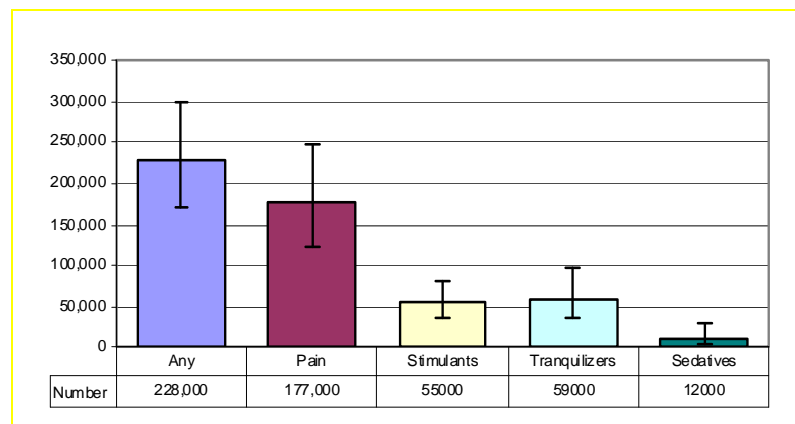
*The National Survey on Drug Use and Health asks individuals if they used prescription drugs for nonmedical purposes.*

*Nationally, more persons initiated nonmedical use of narcotic pain relievers in the past year than initiated use of marijuana or cocaine. <sup>1</sup>*

*The rate of nonmedical use of pain relievers in Oregon is higher than that of the nation. <sup>1</sup>*

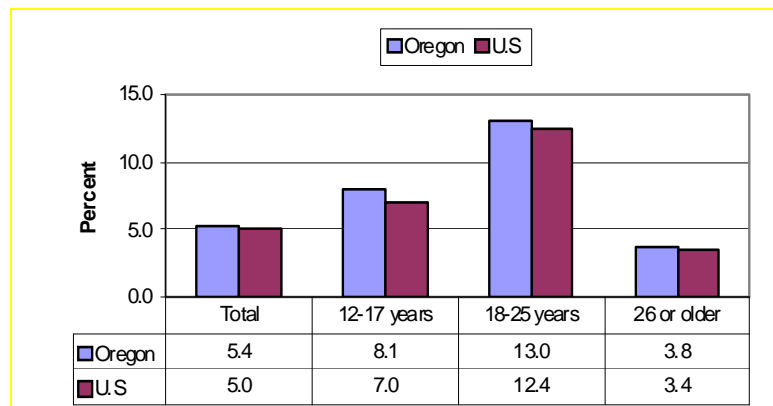
*National studies and published reports indicate that the intentional abuse of prescription drugs such as pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants and sedatives to get high is a growing concern, especially among teens. Youth are turning away from street drugs and using prescription drugs to get high. <sup>2</sup>*

### Annual Nonmedical Use of Prescription Drugs<sup>1</sup> Among Oregonians 12 and Older\*



Number of people using prescription drugs for nonmedical purposes each year falls within the following ranges: Any use 172,000 to 299,000; pain medications 124,000 to 249,000; stimulants 38,000 to 80,000; tranquilizers 35,000 to 96,000; sedatives 4,000 to 31,000.

### Nonmedical use of Pain Relievers in Past Year<sup>3</sup> Oregon Averages Based on 2005-2006



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## Keep in mind:

*Many people believe prescription drugs are safer than illegal drugs such as marijuana, methamphetamine, heroin and cocaine. While prescription medications are legal and important resources, data indicate misuse of prescription drugs is the most rapidly increasing form of substance abuse.*

*Abuse of prescription medications can be a gateway to further illegal drug use. National data show many persons abuse pain relievers before using other drugs.<sup>1</sup>*

*Adolescents are more likely than young adults to become dependent on prescription drugs.<sup>2</sup>*

For more information, visit the DHS resource center @ [http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/addiction/resource\\_center.shtml](http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/addiction/resource_center.shtml)



## How does it affect health care?

Based on national data from the Drug Abuse Warning Network, of those hospital emergency room visits involving drug misuse or abuse:

- 25% involved pharmaceuticals alone,
- 8% involved illegal drugs with pharmaceuticals, and
- 14% involved illegal drugs with pharmaceuticals and alcohol.<sup>3</sup>

In a study by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, physicians and pharmacists identified the three most common methods of prescription drug diversion:

- Doctor shopping,
- Forged or altered prescriptions, and
- Patient deception or manipulation of doctors.<sup>2</sup>

In the same study, 28.9 percent of the pharmacists indicated they experienced theft or robbery of controlled drugs within the last five years.<sup>2</sup>

## Successful Approaches

The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse recommends comprehensive and collaborative efforts that:

1. Train health care professionals,
2. Safeguard controlled prescription drugs from children,
3. Educate the public on the dangers of prescription drug abuse,
4. Encourage consumers to explore alternatives to prescription pain medication with their health care providers, and
5. Strengthen monitoring and enforcement to prevent and detect diversion.

### ENDNOTES:

1. Colliver, J.D., Kroutil, L.A., Dai, L., & Groerer, J. C. (2006). *Misuse of prescription drugs: Data from the 2002, 2003, and 2004 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health* (DHHS Publication No. SMA 06-4192, Analytic Series A-28) Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies.
2. National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. *Under the Counter: The Diversion and Abuse of Controlled Prescription Drugs in the U. S.* July 2005.
3. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies. *State Estimates of Substance Use from the 2005-2006 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health*. OAS Series #H-33, DHHS Publication No. (SMA) 08-4311, Rockville, MD, 2008..