GenerationRx

Preventing the Misuse and Abuse of Prescription Medications

EVERY 15 MINS.

Why prescription drug abuse is more serious than you might think

Workbook

EVERY 15 MINS.

Introduction – Where are we?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that approximately 100 Americans die every day from drug overdoses, the majority of which are caused by prescription drugs like painkillers (e.g., Vicodin®, OxyContin®), sedatives (e.g., Xanax®, Valium®), and stimulants (e.g., Adderall®, Ritalin®). **This means that, on average, someone in the United States dies from a drug overdose about *every 15 minutes*.** According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, the average age of first non-medical use of a prescription drug is 21-22 years old, and the rate of prescription drug abuse is higher among those 18-25 years of age than in any other group. So, we have reached a prescription drug abuse epidemic in the United States, which is of particular concern on college campuses. Let's consider three different aspects of this problem: How did we get here? Does it really matter? And where do we go from here? We will do so by asking our audience to first discuss three blocks of questions in small groups. Then we will come back together to share insights with the larger group.

First discussion block – How did we get here?

How did the misuse/abuse of prescription medications become one of the deadliest public health crises we currently face?

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Key concepts:

- Pharmaceutical populism
- Misperceptions of safety and legality when abusing prescription drugs
- Easy access to prescription medications

Why do college students sometimes choose to misuse or abuse prescription drugs?

Key concepts:

- Self-diagnosis and self-prescribing
- To party or get "high"
- So-called "cognitive enhancers" for studying
- Misperceptions of the social norm

Do college students view the abuse of prescription and illegal "street" drugs differently? Why?

OxyContin®

Heroin

They're more similar than you might think!

Second discussion block – Does it really matter?

What are the potential consequences that could result from the non-medical use of prescription drugs?
How might the abuse of prescription drugs affect you legally, socially, and in terms of your health?
How might your choice to abuse or share prescription drugs affect others?

Key concepts:

- It is a violation of federal and state laws to use medications without a prescription.
- Remember that background checks (including drug-related offenses) are routinely required when applying for graduate programs or jobs.
- What seems like a personal choice (to misuse or abuse a prescription drug) may actually affect more than just the user.
- You may be liable if you provide prescription medications to others and they are hurt.
- There are many potentially catastrophic health consequences of prescription drug abuse.

Third discussion block – Where do we go from here?

How do we fix this?
What can we do to prevent prescription drug misuse and abuse among college students?

Key concepts:

- Sharing isn't caring.
- Spread the word.
- Consider healthy alternatives to managing our lives with pharmaceuticals.

What are some important safe medication-taking guidelines?

Key concepts:

- If a prescription was not written for you, simply do not use it.
- If a medication has been prescribed for you, use it only as directed and do not share it with others.
- The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality has laid out a simple summary of other ways to be safe with medications: (1) Give your healthcare team important information. (2) Get the facts about your medicines. (3) Stay with your treatment plan. (4) Keep a record of your medicines.[1]

Where can a college student go if they need help with a prescription drug abuse problem?

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Need Help?:

- Contact your college or university counseling, student health or wellness center.
- Talk with your family, your doctor or pharmacist, academic advisor, or resident advisor.
- The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration provides a searchable directory of drug and alcohol treatment programs, see **http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov.**
- For a poisoning emergency (e.g., drug overdose) in the U.S. call **1.800.222.1222.**

What other resources are available relating to this issue?

The Generation Rx Initiative **www.go.osu.edu/generationrx** or **www.cardinalhealth.com/generationrx**

The National Council on Patient Information and Education **http://www.talkaboutrx.org/college_resource_kit.jsp**

1 Your Medicine: Be Smart. Be Safe. Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research, 2011.
(http://www.ahrq.gov/consumer/safemeds/yourmeds.htm)

Notes:

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cardinalhealth.com/GenerationRx

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