GenerationRx
Preventing the Misuse and Abuse of Prescription Medications

The issue

A Toolkit for Teens

Prescription medications are becoming drugs-of-abuse of choice, with seven million Americans abusing prescription painkillers, sedatives or stimulants in the past month.[1] Among our nation's youth, one in five teens has abused a prescription drug.[2] As a result, unintentional drug overdoses, the majority of which are due to prescription drugs, are now the second leading cause of accidental death in the U.S. In 16 states and the District of Columbia, it is the leading cause of accidental death![3] This troubling phenomenon is fueled by several things. First, teens may have relatively easy access to prescription medications from family and friends. In addition, they often have inaccurate perceptions relating to the safety and legality of using medications for non-medical purposes. And our drug-taking culture, in which we expect quick fixes and have easy access to information about medications, underlies these behaviors.

To some degree, this may be a different kind of drug abuse which calls for different approaches to educational prevention. For while abusing prescription drugs for mood alteration, or to get "high," is still an important focus for prevention, critical reasons for misusing or abusing prescription medications also include issues of self-diagnosing and self-prescribing. Young people often use prescription drugs to manage their lives, with little understanding of the potential health, social, legal and professional development consequences of doing so.

This toolkit is designed to provide resources for educating teens about these issues.

It is dynamic and will be regularly updated to provide the best tools for prescription drug abuse prevention. We have organized the toolkit to provide presentation tools, activities, and visual aids. These materials could be delivered in formal educational settings, after school programming, youth organizations, or other contexts.

In some cases, teachers may wish to introduce these materials to students. Other adults or peers may also deliver these important prevention messages. We believe that peer-to-peer prevention efforts, when supported with accurate and appropriate information and training, are perhaps the most powerful means of getting these messages to youth.

What follows is a brief discussion of appropriate approaches to educating teens about the dangers of misusing or abusing prescription drugs, including models which illustrate these principles. References for learning more about prescription drug abuse and its prevention are provided, and selected resources for youth prevention efforts are described. These resources are available at **www.cardinalhealth.com/GenerationRx** and **go.osu.edu/generationrx.**

1 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)
2 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (Partnership for a Drug-Free America)
3 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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