Prescription Drug Abuse

Prescription drugs are strong medicines used to relieve pain, control symptoms, and help people heal (Irwin-Olson, 2015). In recent years, there has been a dramatic increase in the acceptance and use of prescription opioids for the treatment of chronic, non-cancer pain, despite serious risks and the lack of evidence about their long-term effectiveness (“Opioid Overdose,” 2016). Providers wrote nearly a quarter of a billion opioid prescriptions in 2013—which is enough opioid prescriptions for every American adult to have their own bottle of pills (“Opioid Overdose,” 2016). To reverse this epidemic, we need to improve the way we treat pain. We must prevent abuse, addiction, and overdose before they start.

Risk Factors for Prescription Opioid Pain Reliever Abuse and Overdose

- Obtaining overlapping prescriptions from multiple providers and pharmacies.
- Taking high daily dosages of prescription opioid pain relievers.
- Having mental illness or a history of alcohol or other substance abuse.
- Living in rural areas and having low income.

Rates of abuse and overdoses

Anyone who takes prescription opioids can become addicted to them and once addicted, it can be hard to stop (“Opioid Overdose,” 2016). In 2014, nearly two million Americans either abused or were dependent on prescription opioid pain relievers (“Opioid Overdose,” 2016).


In addition to the serious risks of addiction, abuse, and overdose, the use of prescription opioids can have a number of side effects, even when taken as directed. Potential side effects can include building up one’s tolerance and developing physical dependence.
Tolerance is defined when a user needs to take more of the medication for the same effect and physical dependence is classified as having symptoms of withdrawal once the medication is stopped (“Opioid Overdose,” 2016).

**Warning signs of drug abuse:**

- Person cannot control his/her use,
- Person uses drugs to escape their problems,
- A person’s personality changes while using the drug,
- The person has problems at work or school related to using the drug,
- Family or friends are concerned about the person’s drug use (Irwin-Olson, 2015).

**Where can you find help?**

- University Health Services, Psychological Services [http://www.kent.edu/psych](http://www.kent.edu/psych)
- Counseling and Human Development Center [https://www.kent.edu/ehhs/centers/chdc](https://www.kent.edu/ehhs/centers/chdc)
- Psychological Clinic [http://www.kent.edu/psychology/clinic](http://www.kent.edu/psychology/clinic)
- Narcotics Anonymous [www.nabuckeye.org](http://www.nabuckeye.org)
- Families Anonymous [www.familiesanonymous.org](http://www.familiesanonymous.org)
- National Institute on Drug Abuse [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)
- Coleman Professional Services [www.coleman-bh.com/portage](http://www.coleman-bh.com/portage)
- Townhall II [www.townhall2.com](http://www.townhall2.com)
Sources: