

**Wisconsin Nurses Association
2011 Reference Report # 7**

Subject: America's Prescription Drug Abuse Epidemic
Introduced by: WNA Board of Directors
WNA Core Issue(s): Patient Safety & Advocacy

Summary: A 2011 White House, President's Report states that: "Prescription drug abuse is the nation's fastest-growing drug problem. While there has been a marked decrease in the use of some illegal drugs like cocaine, data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) shows that nearly one-third of people aged 12 and over who used drugs for the first time in 2009 began by using a prescription drug non-medically. The same survey found that over 70 percent of people who abused prescription pain relievers got them from friends or relatives, while approximately 5 percent got them from a drug dealer or from the Internet. Additionally, the latest *Monitoring the Future* study—the nation's largest survey of drug use among young people—showed that prescription drugs are the second most-abused category of drugs after marijuana. In our military, illicit drug use increased from 5 percent to 12 percent among active duty service members over a three-year period from 2005 to 2008, primarily attributed to prescription drug abuse" (p 1). Wisconsin's 2020 State Health Plan notes that there is a disproportionate burden among populations already identified as "at-risk" for poor health. <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/hw2020/pdf/alcohol.pdf>

According to the June 2011 *Prescriber's Letter*, "unintentional deaths due to opioids have quadrupled in 8 years...and treatment for opioid abuse has increased five-fold in 10 years" (p. 35). Since health care providers write the prescriptions, it is imperative that nursing support efforts for curtailing prescription drug abuse.

More than 40 states have Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs). Wisconsin has enacted legislation but it is not fully operational as of May 2011.

http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/faq/rx_monitor.htm The National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws (<http://www.namsdl.org/home.htm>) is an organization which can help in this effort.

Improper prescription medication disposal creates opportunities for diversion and abuse of the water supply.

Recommendations: The Wisconsin Nurses Association will...

1. Support the recommendations of the 2011 White House President's Report which include:
 - a. Education to raise the awareness of parents, youth, patients, and healthcare providers regarding prescription drug abuse.
 - b. Development of Tracking & Monitoring Programs of prescription drug usage and abuse.
 - c. Proper medication disposal to prevent diversion and environmental harm.
 - d. Enforcement, including supporting actions against pain clinics and prescribers who are not prescribing within the usual course of practice and not for legitimate medical purposes. Also working for community-based solutions for "doctor-shopping."
2. Direct the WNA Board of Directors to appoint a workgroup which will identify the educational, policy, research, and legal strategies related to the recommendations contained the White House President's Report.

WNA Goal:

Goal 1: Assure that the registered nurse is an essential provider in all practice settings through education, research, workplace advocacy, legislation, and regulation.

References

“Monitoring the Future” <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/pubs/monographs/mtf-overview2010.pdf>.

Accessed April 29, 2011.

President’s Report (2011) “Epidemic: Responding to America’s Prescription Drug Abuse Crisis”

http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/pdf/rx_abuse_plan.pdf Accessed June 8, 2011.

“National Survey on Drug Use & Health” <https://nsduhweb.rti.org/> Accessed April 29, 2011.

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“Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs” http://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/faq/rx_monitor.htm