

PRESS RELEASE

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DRUG 'DEALER' LURKING IN YOUR CABINET?

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JACKSON (October 2010) – Have you ever know someone to save their unused prescriptions to use at a later time or taken a higher dosage than recommended by their doctor? Did you know that these, along with giving your prescription drugs to another person, are all forms of prescription drug misuse and abuse? Prescription drug misuse and abuse is cause for great concern.

As of 2008¹, teens cite prescription drugs as the second most accessible drugs available to them, after marijuana. In 2010, a local focus groups of Jackson adults showed prescription drug abuse as one of the top drugs abused². Teens also view the drugs as 'safe' highs. Prescription drugs are medications that should only be used *as prescribed*. The addictive potential of prescription drugs is the same as that of illegal drugs - such as cocaine or heroin - and the consequences of use can be severe. Opioid drugs are the most commonly misused of prescription drugs. Below are the top three most abused prescription drugs in the United States.

OPIOID (e.g., OxyContin, Vicodin, Percocet), also known as analgesics or opiods, are drugs that are prescribed for moderate to severe physical pain. They are abused because of their euphoric, sedating and numbing effects. Narcotic abuse causes tolerance and dependence and the withdrawal symptoms are severe.

DEPRESSANTS (e.g., Xanax, Valium, Librium) are drugs that are prescribed to treat anxiety and sleep disorders. They are abused because of their sedating properties. With abuse, depressants cause tolerance and dependence and the withdrawal symptoms can be severe.

STIMULANTS (e.g., Ritalin, Dexedrine, Meridia) are prescribed to treat ADD/ADHD and other conditions such as asthma. They are abused because of their energizing and euphoric effects. Stimulants do not generally cause tolerance or dependence, but abuse is associated with hostility and paranoia. There is also great risk for cardiovascular failure and seizures.

Aside from the potential for abuse and misuse, prescription drugs can sometimes be the first step towards illegal drug use. Recently, Jackson has seen a spike in Heroin use and related crimes. History tells us that if the rates of prescription drug use for non-medical reasons increases, then heroin and cocaine use will also increase. Additionally, Oxycotin and Vicidon have been referred to by heroin addicts as the "poor man's" heroin.

It's critical that we educate our community, specifically youth, parents and the elderly, about *proper* prescription drug use. Adults can also educate themselves on how and where to store prescriptions and how to dispose of unused drugs. *Proper* use of prescription drugs will protect our community from the negative effects and consequences of misuse. In turn, this will decrease the likelihood of individuals transitioning to the use of street drugs.

For additional information about prescription drug safety and the signs and symptoms of drug abuse, go to www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov.

¹ www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov, July 2008

² Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, focus group, Summer 2010

You can also contact:

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