



CLAAD

Center for Lawful Access
and Abuse Deterrence

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Prescription Drug Abuse Poses Public Health Threat Alliance Releases Prevention Strategy

August 24, 2010 – Washington, DC – As celebrity tragedies involving prescription medications continue to make headlines, a national alliance of families, medical professionals, law enforcement, and drug abuse prevention advocates today released a national strategy to counter the disturbing rise in prescription drug abuse.

Actress Lindsay Lohan was recently released from jail for violations related to a lengthy addiction battle reportedly supported by “doctor shopping.” A jury in Los Angeles has been selected to hear testimony in a drug conspiracy case against the lawyer and two physicians of deceased model-actress Anna Nicole Smith. Smith died of a drug overdose in 2007. It was just over a year ago that pop icon Michael Jackson met an untimely death due to an overdose of medicines prescribed by his doctor.

Abuse of prescription medications is not limited to Hollywood. A new government study confirms a 400 percent spike nationwide in prescription drug abuse between 1998 and 2008.

“Rising rates of prescription drug abuse are the result of a combination of factors and can only be addressed successfully by a coordinated, multi-sector strategy,” said Michael Barnes, a spokesperson for CLAAD, the Center for Lawful Access and Abuse Deterrence. “Government plays a role, but not necessarily a lead role, in preventing abuse.”

CLAAD’s *2010 National Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Strategy*, endorsed by 25 not-for-profit health and safety organizations and professional associations, advocates a balanced public policy approach. The strategy is a product of consultations with more than 40 interested experts who convened in December 2009 for a consensus-building session.

Recent reports note that prescription drug abuse surpasses the public abuse of cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamines. The number of teens abusing prescription drugs for the first time surpasses the number of new teenage marijuana users.

Controlling the abuse of prescription medications, and especially pain relievers, is complicated by the need to keep such medications available for lawful use by prescribers and patients. About 70 million Americans currently live with chronic pain, and many are undertreated. And yet diversion, or the illegal redirection of prescription medications, has led to an alarming trend, accounting for more than 90 percent of the unintentional deaths caused by drug overdose.

“As a Registered Nurse, I fully understand the need for patients to have access to medications, but unfortunately, I know too well the urgency of the need to reduce prescription drug abuse, as I lost my son, Ryan, to prescription drugs.” said Francine Haight, Founder of RYAN's Cause (Reaching Youths Abusing Narcotics).

The *2010 National Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Strategy* details a number of broad-based policy recommendations to address the challenge of ensuring the availability of prescription medications while preventing their abuse, including:

- Optimizing state prescription monitoring programs and requiring health care providers to use them;
- Updating Food and Drug Administration policies and labeling standards to speed the development and use of medications introducing limits to abuse; and,
- Providing safe and convenient consumer options for the disposal of expired or unused medications.

The *2010 National Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Strategy* may be found online at <http://claad.org/>.

“The prevention and treatment strategies set forth in this document are practical and achievable,” said Andrea G. Barthwell, M.D., CEO of Two Dreams Outer Banks, an addiction recovery program. “Pharmaceutical companies have an obligation to make their products safer, patients must safeguard and never share their medications, and health care providers must routinely test for abuse and make referrals to treatment.”

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About the Center for Lawful Access and Abuse Deterrence

The primary objective of the Center for Lawful Access and Abuse Deterrence (CLAAD) is to coordinate a comprehensive national effort to prevent the diversion, misuse, and abuse of prescription medications while ensuring adequate medical care for patients in need. CLAAD supports a balanced approach to prescription drug policy: Efforts to prevent abuse must not impede proper medical practice and patient care. CLAAD enables health professionals, law enforcement, businesses, and government, among many other entities, to share resources and work together to prevent the diversion, misuse, and abuse of medications.

Sources:

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