



CLAAD

Center for Lawful Access
and Abuse Deterrence

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For more information, contact:
Kevin Borland, kborland@perituspr.com
(502) 618-5889

Prescription Drug Abuse Highlighted in New National Survey on Drug Use Alliance Calls for Pharmaceutical Companies, FDA To Do More

September 16, 2010 – Washington, DC – The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) today released the results of the latest (2009) National Survey on Drug Use and Health. The survey provides new data on a problem communities across the nation are confronting each day: prescription drug abuse. The abuse of prescription medications surpasses the abuse of cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamines. The number of teens abusing prescription drugs surpasses the number of new teenage marijuana users.

A national alliance of families, medical professionals, law enforcement, and drug abuse prevention advocates has released a national strategy to counter the disturbing rise in prescription drug abuse. In it, they call for pharmaceutical manufacturers and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to do more to address prescription drug abuse.

"Pharmaceutical companies are skirting their societal obligation to make their products safer. It is time for the FDA to intervene," said Michael Barnes, a spokesperson for CLAAD, the Center for Lawful Access and Abuse Deterrence.

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.

"The Drug Enforcement Administration and state law enforcement are responding capably to prescription drug abuse. The FDA should be equally as engaged," said April Rovero, whose son Joey died last year of from a lethal combination of abused prescription medication and alcohol.

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 involving the efforts of government, health care professionals, patients, and others. The strategy is a product of consultations with more than 40 interested experts who convened in December 2009 for a consensus-building session.

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The *Prevention Strategy* details recommendations as to how the FDA can address the challenge of ensuring the availability of prescription medications while preventing their abuse. Among them are the following:

- Incentivize the development of medications formulated to minimize abuse.
- Offer guidance on the data necessary to illustrate the abuse-deterrent qualities of new medications.
- Mandate that medication labels and medication guides contain information on proper medication disposal.

The *Strategy* calls for pharmaceutical companies to take the following steps to prevent the abuse of their products:

- Allocate resources to developing medications introducing limits to abuse.
- Collaborate with other pharmaceutical manufacturers to provide conformity among risk evaluation and mitigation strategies.
- Provide financial support for state prescription monitoring programs.

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

“The recommendations set forth in this document are practical and achievable,” said Andrea G. Barthwell, M.D., a former White House drug policy advisor and CEO of Two Dreams Outer Banks, an addiction recovery program. “The FDA and pharmaceutical companies have to join law enforcement, physicians, and parents in a comprehensive effort to address prescription drug abuse.”

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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 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:

Michael C. Barnes, Esq.; Andrea G. Barthwell, MD; Jennifer Marson and Florence C. Paillard, PhD.

<http://claad.org/>

Reporters: CLAAD can help put you in contact with families who have suffered from prescription drug abuse and are willing to contribute to your coverage of this issue.

For more information, please contact:

Kevin Borland

(502) 618-5889

kborland@perituspr.com