

Background

In the US, the leading cause of injury death is from prescription drug overdose. Commonly abused prescription medications are (a) pain relievers (opioids), (b) CNS depressants (tranquilizers, sedatives, hypnotics), and (c) stimulants. Opioids are a class that includes heroin and prescription pain relievers. CNS depressants manage anxiety and stimulates are used in ADHD. A consequence of abuse is drug overdose death, with opioids being the leading cause. Opioids have a strong potential to be abused resulting in addiction. In order to understand this crisis, it is critical to examine: (a) demographics, (b) reasons for abuse, and (c) the provider of drugs for targeted prevention.

Methods

Information was gathered utilizing the search engines (a) Journal of the American Medical Association, (b) EBSCO host, (c) Google Scholar, and (d) the LIU library database. Search terms included: (a) prescription drug abuse, (b) prescription drug overdose, (c) United States, and (d) demographics. All publications were from 2010 to 2018.

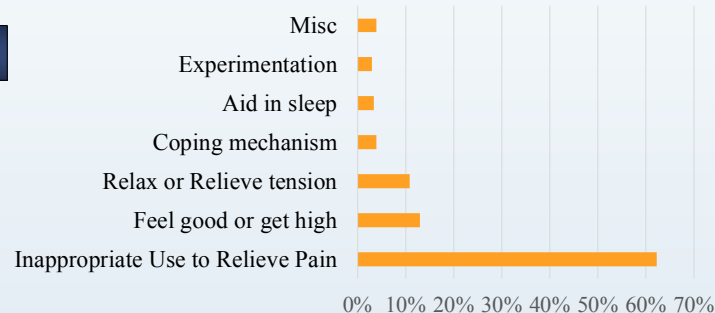
Demographics

In examining specific demographics, (a) non-Hispanic males are more likely to abuse prescription stimulants and tranquilizers, (b) Hispanic males are more likely to abuse prescription painkillers, and (c) non-Hispanic females are more at risk to abuse prescription sedatives. Adults from the age 18 to 25 years old were found to be the largest population that abuses (a) opioid pain relievers, (b) ADHD stimulants and (c) anti-anxiety drugs

Results

Mental health disorders put an individual at greater risk for abuse, especially when an opioid is prescribed in conjunction with: (a) an antidepressant, (b) antipsychotic, or (c) benzodiazepine. From 2004-2011 emergency department visits related to prescription drug abuse rose 114%. Prescription drug abuse (28%) outpaces illicit drug (25%) use in emergency department visits. Among the prescription medicines, pain relievers have shown to be the most problematic with 75.2% of all pharmaceutical overdose deaths being from opioids.

Reasons for Prescription Abuse



Conclusion

Over 80% of Americans have annual physicals, allowing providers to screen for prescription drug abuse. Patients must be counseled on the use and storage of their prescriptions to prevent redistribution to unintended audiences. Utilization of electronic prescription drug monitoring programs before prescribing scheduled drugs and evaluation of the patient's medication history should be done to prevent dangerous drug interactions. If prescription pain relievers are indicated, then it should be prescribed for short term use at a minimally effective dose without refills. Prescribers should offer close follow up and consider alternative methods for chronic pain relief such as acupuncture and physical therapy.

Resources

NY helpline for drug abuse and alcoholism
877-846-7369

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