Prescription Drug Abuse

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Prescription Drug Abuse
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Overview
What is Prescription Drug Abuse?
• Some medications have mind-altering effects that lend themselves to be more likely to be abused
• Prescription drugs can be abused in multiple ways:
  1. Using a medication that is not prescribed to you
  2. Taking a drug in a higher dosage or different form than originally prescribed
  3. Taking a drug for a different reason than prescribed
• Most commonly abused drug categories
  1. Pain relievers
  2. Stimulants
  3. Anxiety relievers that affect the central nervous system

Importance of the Issue
• Many prescription drug abuses receive the drug from a relative or friend
  - Important for prevention
• More people die yearly from overdoses on prescription opioids than any other drugs combined

Health Impact
Effects of Abuse and Overdoses
- Opioids can lead to brain damage
- Stimulants can impair the cardiovascular system
- All have potential for addiction, and overdoses can lead to death

• Prescription drug abuse can lead to the use of illicit drugs

Contributors to Prescription Drug Abuse

Biggest Contributors
• Individual behavior choices
  People may choose to take their prescribed drugs appropriately or they may choose to abuse them in the 3 ways mentioned in the overview
• Social Factors
  70% of people that abused or misused drugs got them from a friend or relative ("Drug Facts: Prescription and Over-the-Counter Medications," 2014)

Example: Students may obtain Adderall from someone in their social environment to improve their academic performance (stressful environment makes it more tempting for them)

Indicators

Main Indicators:
• Demand for drug treatment
• Drug treatment medication prescribed/dispensed
• Financial status
• Access to treatment
• Access to Medicaid
• Treatment program availability
• Number of physicians involved in treatment
• Rates of death
• Rates of disease
• Rates of infectious diseases
• Rates of crime
• Mean Drug Sales

Other Indicators Used:
• Cluster Analysis
• Doctor-Shopping Indicator
• Other societal factors
  Ex: Study of homeless men

Impacts of Prescription Drug Abuse

• 52 million people in the United States have abused a prescription drug in some way (Collins, 2015)
• Overdoses from prescription drugs cause more than a million emergency room visits per year and cause more deaths than car accidents
• Children are more likely to develop drug addictions or mental illness if parents are addicted and also more likely to be abused or neglected
• The cost of prescription drug abuse in 2006 was $53.4 billion (Hansen, 2011)

Specific Role and Impact in Pharmacy
• Pharmacists play a direct role in fighting prescription drug abuse because they are involved in making policy about regulation and prescribing methods of prescription drugs as well as patient education
• According to the DEA, pharmacists are required to ensure a prescription for a controlled substance is legitimate (Collins, 2015)
• Pharmacists can stop drug abuse by refusing to fill a prescription, counseling a patient, or referring a patient for treatment

Recommendations to Reduce Problem

• Make better use of prescription drug monitoring programs
• Make sure pharmacists and prescribers are using real time tools for prescription histories that are current up to the minute they are entered (this will help identify “doctor shopping”)
• Raise awareness of prescription drug abuse by educating parents, youth, patients, and even healthcare providers about the dangers of prescription drugs

Bibliography

This QR code links to a webpage which has differing facts concerning the overview on prescription drug abuse, particularly in teenagers.