

CESAR FAX: February 5, 2007 (Vol. 16, Issue 5)

Diverted Pharmaceutical Drugs Widely Available Across U.S.; Decreases Seen in States with Prescription Monitoring Programs

The availability of diverted pharmaceutical narcotic, depressant, and stimulant drugs is high and increasing across most parts of the United States, according to the *2007 National Drug Threat Assessment*, issued by the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC). More than three-fourths (78.8%) of state and local law enforcement agencies report high or moderate availability of diverted pharmaceuticals in their area. Following are specific findings from the report, based on analysis of the most recently available law enforcement, intelligence, and public health data.

- The internet is an increasingly prevalent source of diverted pharmaceutical drugs and such drugs are often obtained through internet pharmacies without proof of prescription, consultation, or doctor's examination.
- While the diversion of pharmaceuticals is widespread, the availability of such drugs has been reduced in some areas. These reductions are most evident in states that have implemented Prescription Monitoring Programs (PMPs),* particularly Kentucky, Michigan, Nevada, Ohio, and Utah.
- “Many pharmaceutical drug abusers are substituting illegal drugs, especially in areas where pharmaceutical drug diversion has been reduced”(p. 20). Law enforcement and public health reports from California, Florida, Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin indicate that some opiate abusers who began abusing OxyContin® have switched to using heroin.
- The increased use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags** attached to or placed within pharmaceutical packaging can decrease diversion, as well as identify vulnerable areas in the supply chain and aid law enforcement investigations.

*Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PMPs) are systems that collect controlled substance prescription data in a centralized database in order to detect trends in diversion and abuse. As of June 2006, 32 states had legislation requiring PMPs and 16 states were proposing, preparing, or considering such legislation.

**RFID tags enable companies to continuously track, trace, and authenticate the chain of custody for pharmaceuticals, including individual prescription bottles. The FDA has recommended widespread use of RFID in the pharmaceutical supply chain, utilizing a phased-in approach in which placing RFID tags on products most vulnerable to counterfeiting and diversion is the first step.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from National Drug Intelligence Center(NDIC), *National Drug Threat Assessment, 2007, 2006*. Available online at <http://www.usdoj.gov/ndic/pubs21/21137/index.htm>.

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Number of New Methamphetamine Users Drops

The number of U.S. household residents age 12 or older who used methamphetamine for the first time in the past year decreased significantly from 2004 to 2005, according to data from the most recent National Survey on Drug Use and Health. The number of recent methamphetamine initiates remained relatively stable from 2002 and 2004, but decreased from 318,000 to 192,000 from 2004 to 2005. At the same time, the percentage of persons using methamphetamine in the past year has also decreased, from 0.7% in 2002 to 0.5% in 2005 (data not shown). Since “measures of initiation are often leading indicators of emerging patterns of substance use” (p. 45), it is possible that there will be a further decline in the prevalence of methamphetamine use when 2006 survey data are released later this year.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), “Methamphetamine Use,” *The NSDUH Report*, January 26, 2007. Available online at <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/2k6/meth/meth.cfm>.

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High School Seniors More Likely to Use Illicit Drugs than Alcohol in Cars

High school seniors are more likely to use illicit drugs than alcohol in a car, according to findings from the 2006 national Pride Survey. Ten percent of 12th graders reported that the usual place they drink alcohol is in a car, while 13% said they usually use marijuana and 14% said they use illicit drugs in a car. Similar results were found for 10th and 11th grade students, while 9th graders were about equally likely to use alcohol or illicit drugs in a car (data not shown). While the survey question did not ask if the student was driving, the findings suggest that “illicit drugs may be more prevalent than alcohol in teenage impaired driving.”

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from International Survey Associates, “Teen Drug Use in Cars,” *PRIDE Newsletter*, January 16, 2007. Available online at <http://www.pridesurveys.com/newsletters/archive/011007.htm>.

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FY2008 Federal Drug Control Budget Released; Prevention Gets Smallest Percentage in Past Decade

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of the FY2008 national drug control budget is allocated to supply reduction, including domestic law enforcement (28%), interdiction (25%), and international (11%) efforts, according to the *National Drug Control Strategy FY2008 Budget Summary* released earlier this month by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP). The remaining portion of the requested \$12.9 billion budget is allocated to treatment and prevention, areas typically defined as demand reduction. Of note is the reduction in funding for substance abuse prevention to 12% of the total budget—the lowest level in the past decade. Overall, “the FY 2008 budget trend goes against well-established principles of effective drug control policy, including the need for a comprehensive balanced approach between interdiction, law enforcement, overseas programs, and prevention and treatment programming”(Carnevale Associates, p. 1).

SOURCES: Adapted by CESAR from Carnevale Associates, “FY ’08 Drug Budget: Prevention Funding Continues to Decline,” *Policy Brief*, February 2007 (available online at http://www.carnevaleassociates.com/Federal_Drug_Budget_FY08.pdf); and

Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), *National Drug Control Strategy FY2008 Budget Summary*, 2007; *National Drug Control Strategy FY2007 Budget Summary*, 2006; and *National Drug Control Strategy FY2006 Budget Summary*, 2005 (available online at <http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.org/policy/budget.html>).