



The Status of Prescription Drug Abuse in San Diego County: November 2013
What Do the Data Say? What Are We Doing to Reduce This Problem?

The Prescription Drug Abuse Task Force (PDATF), originally the Oxy Task Force, was convened by now retired San Diego County Supervisor Pam Slater Price, the Sheriff Department, District Attorney, Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) and the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in 2008. District 3 Supervisor Dave Roberts now leads this important effort. Since its inception, all partners have agreed that participation from law enforcement, prevention, treatment, education, health, and community advocates is essential to address this growing problem and are committed to working together.

This Report Card reviews the scale of the problem by looking at multiple factors and data points over the last five years in San Diego County. Readers are cautioned not to consider a single data point alone, but rather are encouraged to look at all of the information as well as the direction of the trends over time.

Prescription Drug Misuse and Abuse is a serious problem that affects both health and public safety – at individual, family and community levels. The Rx problem isn't a onetime phenomenon, but rather a growing problem with serious repercussions to quality of life in our region.

Data Sources are listed on page four.

Prescription Drug (Rx) Abuse 2013 Report Card						
	Indicator	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
1	Unintentional Rx-Related Deaths • Number • Rate per 100,000 residents ¹	220 (8.4)	238 (8.9)	228 (8.5)	267 (9.8)	268 (9.8)
2	Emergency Room Painkiller-related Discharges • Number • Rate per 100,000 residents	2040 (64.8)	2231 (70.3)	2931 (91.1)	3,278 (105.2)	Not Available
3	Student Self Report Rx Misuse		19.5%		19.6%	
4	Total Adult Treatment Admissions • Percentage of Prescription Painkillers • Percentage of Heroin	15,041 3.9% 18.5%	14,258 3.9% 19.4%	13,893 4.1% 21.4%	13,696 4.2% 22.0%	14,383 4.7% 23.1%
5	Arrestees Self Report of Rx Misuse • Adult • Juvenile	36% 25%	41% 28%	40% 31%	41% 37%	38% 40%
6	Rx Prosecutions • Rx-specific Fraud Charge • Other Charges with Rx-involved	112 713	123 1,090	84 1,341	125 1,288	117 1,311
7	Pharmacy Robberies/Burglaries	9	15	14	26	8
8	Pounds of Safely Disposed Medications • Take Back Events • Sheriff Dept. Collection Boxes	<i>Disposal activity began in 2010</i>		7,446 3,400	13,008 5,128	16,707 9,902
9	Prescription Pills Per County Resident • Painkillers ² • Anti-anxiety • Stimulants	30.0 11.4 3.8	29.9 10.9 3.6	33.4 13.0 4.3	35.9 13.4 4.5	37.8 13.8 4.7

¹ SANDAG population figures were modified from 2012 Rx Report Card; now based on actual 2010 Census data

² Painkillers include only pills; solution-based prescriptions are 2.5% of all painkillers and are not included in the count.

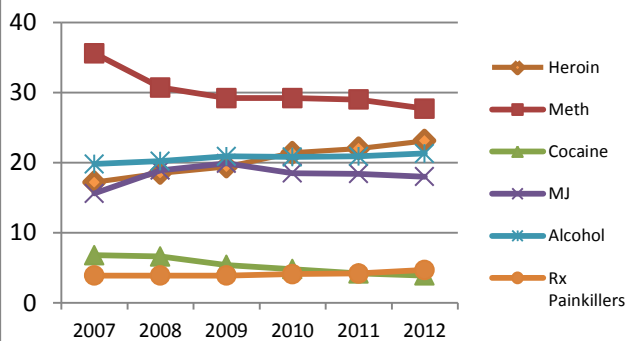
Additional Details on Prescription Drug (Rx) Indicators

Sources listed on page four.

Drug Treatment

Data on the actual number of public treatment admissions in San Diego County reflects the availability of treatment, which varies according to funding and other factors, and does not necessarily reflect the need for treatment among drug users.

Figure 1. Percent of Primary Drug of Choice for Admissions to San Diego County Treatment Programs



Rx-Impaired Driving

In 2012, the first statewide roadside survey ever conducted in California measured alcohol and other drug use among drivers on weekend evenings in eight communities. While 7.4% tested positive for alcohol, 7% were positive for marijuana and 4.6% were positive for Rx and over-the counter drugs. Local data reflects Rx driving is a problem in San Diego County too:

- In 2012, the District Attorney's office made 84 DUI prosecutions where Rx was in the text of the enforcement report.
- Sixteen percent of driving under the influence program attendees reported having used drugs at the time of their DUI arrest.
- 821 individuals in DUI treatment reported Rx abuse, including mixing medications with alcohol and/or not taking medications as prescribed.

Street Price: There is a huge variety of pills, all sold within a range which depends on the amount bought. In some cases, prices have slightly dropped, but overall remain stable. Oxycodone 30mg went from \$15- 30 in 2011 to \$10- \$25 a pill in 2012. Oxycontin 30 mg went from \$5-10 a pill to \$4-\$20. In 2012 price for Xanax 2mg. was stable in a range from \$4 -\$10 a pill.

Figure 2.

Interaction between Substances in Unintentional Overdose Deaths: 2000-2012

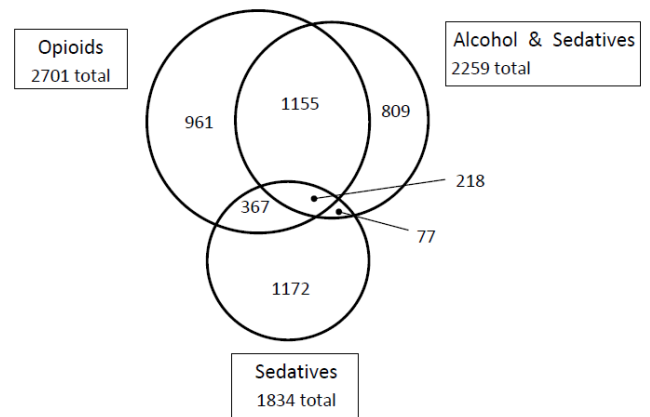
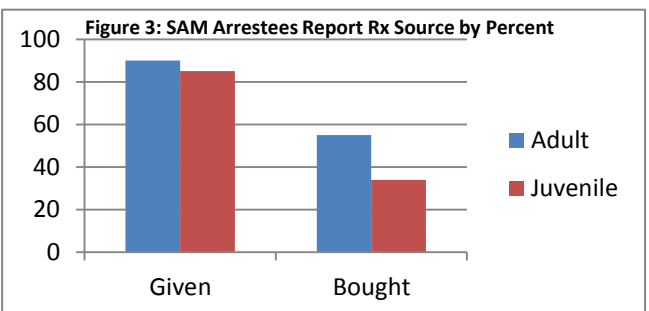


Figure 2 reflects twelve years of unintentional overdose deaths, and displays how prescription painkillers (e.g. Oxycontin or Vicodin) are frequently combined with other drugs with fatal results. Painkillers have additive effects when combined with other substances such as alcohol and other sedatives (e.g., tranquilizers, sleeping pills), which lead to increased respiratory depression and increase the risk for overdose death.

Percent of Arrestees Who Report On How They Obtain Rx.

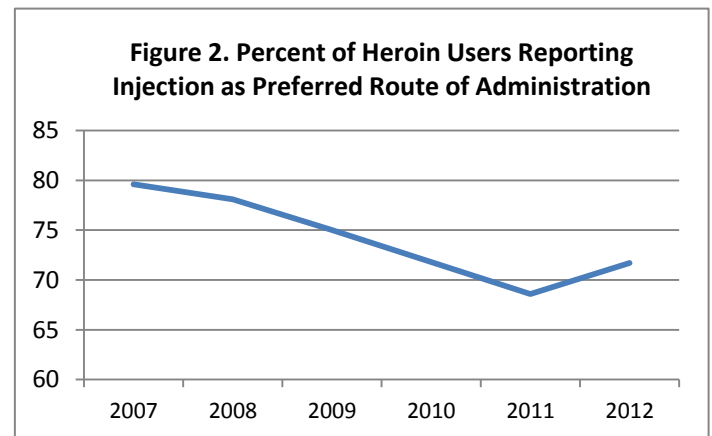
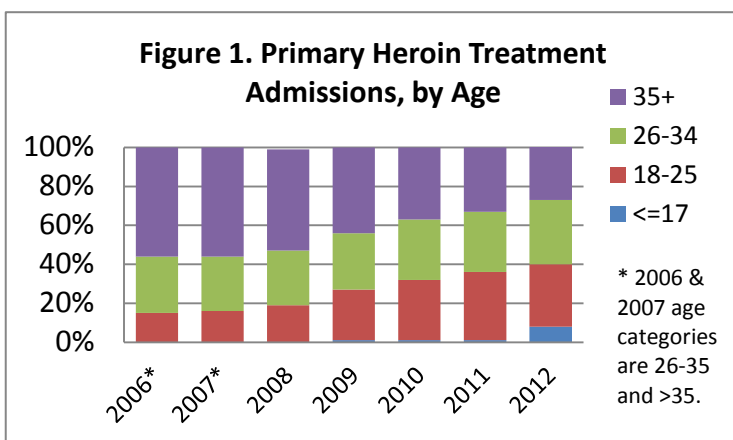
Source: Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) a program operated by the San Diego Association of Governments



2013 Heroin Addendum

Heroin abuse is growing. Heroin seizures and treatment admissions have increased consistently in the last five years. The misuse of painkillers may contribute to this trend, as users switch to heroin after painkillers becomes harder to find or pay for. In 2012, according to the SANDAG's Substance Abuse Monitoring program, 27% of arrestees who reported heroin use said they had used prescription opiates before trying heroin. Of this group, 63% said heroin was a substitute because it was easy to get and was less expensive. These findings echo a 2010 study of young (18-40 yr.) intravenous drug users in San Diego county, where 40% said that they had misused opioids prior to initiating heroin injection (Pollini 2011). Other indicators of the growing heroin problem are listed below. Sources are listed on the next page.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
1. Heroin Seizures (Kgs.) In San Diego County	10.6	7.3	53.2	40.1	24	11.7
At San Diego County Ports of Entry	111	161.2	217.8	214.1	319	470
2. Heroin Price per Gram	NA	\$80-100	\$60-80	\$50-80	\$80-100	\$50-90
3. Adult Arrestees Positive Heroin Rate	7%	7%	7%	10%	9%	11%
4. Treatment Admits: Heroin Primary Drug of Choice	17.2%	18.5%	19.4%	21.4%	22.3%	23.1%
5. Heroin Overdose Deaths	57	74	73	71	80	74



Note that the average age of heroin users in treatment continues to grow younger. In 2012, injection preference dipped back up to 2010 levels.

Looking Forward

The PDATF will continue collecting data to inform priorities for action. The PDATF and individual member agencies work to reduce motivation to misuse prescription, by increasing perception of harm and engaging those who need drug treatment into services, and by reducing access to prescriptions for misuse. In addition to many contributions in these areas by our members, one significant new effort is the launching of the *Safe Prescribing* initiative. The medical community has developed three tools to reduce misuse: new prescriber guidelines, emergency department procedures and patient pain medicine agreements. More information is available at www.SanDiegoSafePrescribing.org.

Become Involved in Keeping San Diego County Healthy, Safe & Thriving

You can make a difference!

- ✓ Safely dispose of your old prescriptions at a Take Back Event or Local Disposal Bins (www.facebook.com/SanDiegoRxAbuseTaskForce)
- ✓ Don't share your own medications, or use medications prescribed to someone else
- ✓ Attend or Request a Community Forum/Meeting in your own community
- ✓ Share this information and talk to your family members and neighbors about the risks involved with the misuse of prescription drugs
- ✓ Please contact (www.facebook.com/SanDiegoRxAbuseTaskForce) for additional information.



Type and Source for Report Card Indicators

1. Unintentional deaths with prescription drug or involvement. *Source: County of San Diego Medical Examiner's Office.*
2. Emergency department discharges per 100,000 with a diagnosis of opiate dependence or abuse. Prior to 2010, hospitals in Fallbrook and Coronado were not included. The 2010 figure represents data from all non-federal hospitals with emergency departments in San Diego County. *Source: County of San Diego Emergency Medical Services.*
3. Percent of a sample of San Diego County 11th graders who report using Rx drugs for non-medical reasons in their lifetime. Collected biannually in the California Healthy Kids Survey.
4. Total admissions to publicly-funded drug treatment in San Diego County that identify Rx Opiates or Heroin as primary drugs of choice. *Source: California Outcomes Measurement System (CalOMS).*
5. Percent that report Rx misuse/abuse from a sample of interviews among adult and juvenile arrestees at time of booking. The 2009 question used the term painkiller; in 2010, the question wording referred to the category of all Rx drugs. *Source: Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM), a program operated by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG).*
6. Number of defendants prosecuted by the San Diego County District Attorney's Office for either Rx-related fraud, or other criminal charges where Rx was present.
7. Number of pharmacy robberies & burglaries reported to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). Does not include attempted robberies and burglaries. *Source: DEA*
8. Pounds of medication safely disposed at Rx Take Back events. *Source: DEA.* Pounds collected at Sheriff Dept. collection boxes. *Source: San Diego County Sheriff's Department.*
9. Prescription pills per San Diego County resident. The numbers of prescribed pills are derived from prescriber (dispenser) reporting to the state, and do not include prescriptions filled at the VA, any military hospitals, or in-hospital patient medications. Three principle groups of medicine are included: a) Painkillers or Morphine-related pain medications such as oxycontin or hydrocodone; b) Anti-anxiety medications or Benzodiazepines such as Valium or Ativan; c) Stimulants or ADHD medication such as Ritalin, Adderall. In 2012, more than 163 million doses of painkillers were prescribed. Population figures used to calculate a per person rate are based on US Census and SANDAG population projection data. *Source: Controlled Substance Utilization Review and Evaluation System (CURES), California Department of Justice.*

Note: Heroin indicators are also drawn from the Medical Examiner office, SANDAG's SAM program and the CalOMS treatment database. Seizure and price information was obtained from the San Diego Law Enforcement Coordination Center.