

Wicked Garden

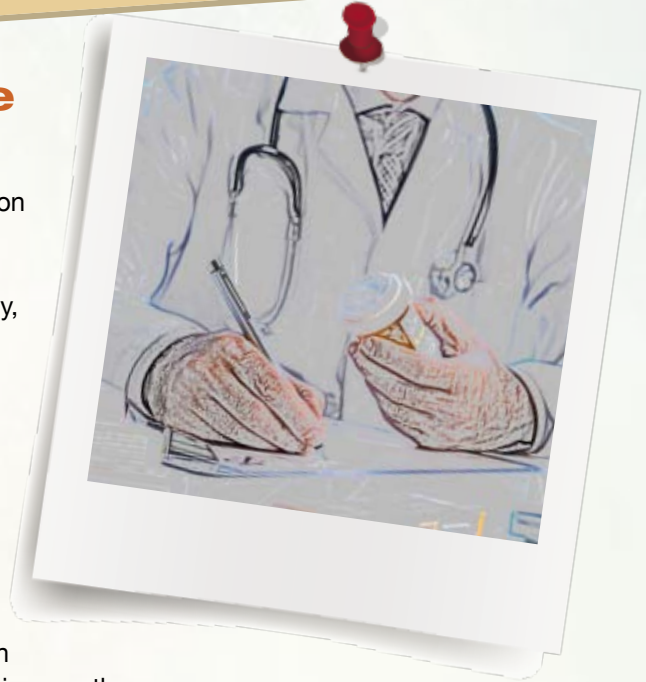
Prescription drug abuse:
a deadly epidemic



PRESCRIPTION DRUGS: WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL?

Just give me a reason

There's a reason prescription drugs are intended to be taken under a doctor's direction: If used improperly, they can be dangerous ... very dangerous. In fact, despite what many teens and adults think, abusing prescription drugs is not safer than abusing illicit drugs. As the facts will tell you, prescription drugs can have dangerous short- and long-term health consequences when used incorrectly or by someone other than for whom they were intended.



And, even in small doses, depressants and painkillers can affect a person's ability to learn. These are not temporary side effects. Prescription drugs should always be taken cautiously and under the care of a licensed medical doctor. Abusing these drugs can lead to permanent and fatal consequences.

Rebellious soul

When taken properly and under a medical provider's supervision, prescription drugs can have many benefits, but there are serious health risks associated with the abuse of prescription drugs. Although these drugs may seem safe because a doctor has prescribed them, a single large dose of prescription painkillers or depressants can result in breathing problems that can lead to death. Abusing prescription stimulants can result in fatal seizures.

Clarity

So, what's the big deal? Prescription drug abuse among teens is a huge problem in our society. In 2012, the Monitoring the Future study reported that almost 15 percent of high school seniors used a prescription drug not prescribed for them in the past year. Findings also showed that prescription and over-the-counter medications account for most of the top drugs abused by high school seniors, second only to marijuana. The two most-abused drugs were Adderall and Vicodin, which both come with some serious side effects.

There's a reason prescription drugs are intended to be taken under a doctor's direction: If used improperly, they can be dangerous. Period. End of story.

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse

The rising tide

- Drug overdose deaths are second only to car crashes for unintentional injury deaths.
- Deaths are largely due to misuse and abuse of prescription drugs. In the majority of deaths, more than one drug is found.
- Every day, 2,500 teens in the United States try prescription drugs to get high for the first time.
- Sixty percent of teens who have abused prescription painkillers did so before age 15.
- Young people ages 12 to 17 abuse prescription drugs more than they abuse ecstasy, crack/cocaine, heroin and methamphetamines combined.

Sources: Partnership for a Drug Free America; Center for Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University

Journaling to self awareness

Keeping a journal or writing a blog is a great way to learn more about yourself. Who are you? Why do you do what you do? Do you have strong convictions? Are you able to stand up to others when your ideas are questioned? In addition to your general thoughts, include your thoughts about articles you read in the *Tampa Bay Times*. To begin your journal, write about something that you have read in the *Times* that directly affects your life. Use specific examples from the article as a basis for your journal entry or blog entry.

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Think about it

Prescription medications, including those medications used for pain, have been and continue to be some of the greatest medical advances of the last century. They are nothing short of miraculous. Prescription pain medicines such as morphine and related drugs (opioids) have relieved pain in millions of people after surgery, burns and broken bones and in those suffering with terminal illnesses such as cancer. But there is a darker side to these drugs. When taken by a person for whom they are not prescribed, or in incorrect dosage or with an incorrect dosing interval, these pain medications can have fatal consequences. All of these pain medications cause respirations (breathing) to stop if an overdose occurs. This is the usual cause of death. There is a reason these powerful pain medicines are prescription only. They are very powerful drugs with potentially life-threatening consequences. Never take these medicines unless they have been prescribed for you!

Prescription drugs should always be taken cautiously and under the care of a licensed medical doctor.

A drug is any nonfood substance that when put into the body changes the way the body or mind works. Altering the way your body and mind work while not being monitored by a physician can be very risky business.

Beware

Prescription drug abuse kills 40 Americans every day, which is more than a threefold increase in the last decade, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control. And

the deadliest drug of all is oxycodone, an opiate found in painkillers such as OxyContin and Percocet. The drug is an effective painkiller because it blocks pain receptors in the spinal cord. The pain doesn't actually go away, but people taking the drug will not feel the pain any more. The effects on the user are the same as using heroine. According to the state medical examiner's office, in 2011, an average of seven Floridians died from prescription drug overdoses every day.

It goes like this

So, the big question is if prescription drugs are dangerous, why are they prescribed by doctors? The answer is that if monitored and used properly, prescription drugs can help you. Doctors consider the potential benefits and risks to each patient before prescribing medications. Before a doctor prescribes a specific medication, he or she will ask about a patient's medical history, including what other health problems they have and what other medications they take. Based on this and other information, physicians can prescribe medications while minimizing the risks.

Parent pointer

Many parents are surprised to learn that they are the most powerful influence on their children when it comes to drugs. But, it's true. How do you model positive behavior for your children? What messages do you give them about casual drug use? Think about it. Sixty percent of teens who have abused prescription painkillers did so before age 15, and 45 percent of those who use prior to the age of 15 will later develop an addiction. Kids need to hear how risky drug abuse can be. They need to know how damaging it can be to their lives. They need you, their parents, to be good role models.

Sources: Partnership for a Drug Free America; Health Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Wrecking ball

Did you know that some popular drugs prescribed for adults can poison a child? Statins, such as Lipitor and Zocor, as well as diabetes drugs, such as metformin, have been causing a rise in poisonings among children. Blood pressure medicines, such as atenolol, can be especially dangerous for small children.

According to a study conducted by doctors at Children's Hospital Boston, 30 percent of the teenagers who took statins suffered serious injury, as did 40 percent of the teens who took opioids. According to the report, although young children took the drugs accidentally, teens purposely took the drugs.

If you suspect someone has taken a drug that has not been prescribed for that person, call 9-1-1.

You can help prevent drug poisonings by being cautious. If someone in your house is prescribed a prescription medication, keep it locked up and dispose of any extra pills when you no longer need them. The effort could prevent a tragedy in your own family. For more information on prescription drug abuse prevention and how you can help prevent prescription drug diversion and abuse in your community, visit the website for the Office of National Drug Control Policy at whitehouse.gov/ondcp.

Sources: NPR and Office of National Drug Control Policy

Parent pointer

What should you do if you suspect your child is taking nonprescribed prescription drugs? Take action! Remember, if your child is using drugs, he or she needs your help. Don't be afraid to be a strong parent, and if the problem becomes too much for you to handle alone, don't hesitate to seek professional help, such as counseling, a support group or a treatment program. The first step is to talk to your child. Share your concerns. Let your child know you are there for him or her. Be understanding and explain your concerns. Open the door to communication and try not to be judgmental.



Young people are a vulnerable population

Crash my party

Why do teens abuse prescription drugs? Teens abuse prescription drugs for a number of reasons: to get high, to treat pain, to relieve stress or to assist with school work. Interestingly, males and females tend to abuse some types of prescription drugs for different reasons. For example, guys are more apt to abuse prescription stimulants to get high, while girls tend to abuse them to stay alert. No matter what the reason for abusing prescription drugs, the results can be devastating.

Abusing prescription drugs can have negative short- and long-term health consequences. Abusing stimulants can cause paranoia, dangerously high body temperatures and an irregular heartbeat. The abuse of opioids can cause drowsiness, nausea, constipation and, depending on the amount taken, slowed breathing. Abusing depressants can cause slurred speech, shallow breathing, fatigue, disorientation, lack of coordination and seizures. And, abuse of any of these substances may result in addiction.

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse



Slow down

So, what is prescription drug abuse? Simply put, prescription drug abuse is when someone takes a prescription drug that was prescribed for someone else, or takes the drug that was prescribed in a manner or dosage other than what was prescribed. In other words, abuse can include taking a friend's or relative's prescription to get high, to treat pain, or because you think it will help with studying. It also includes taking excessive doses of your own prescribed medication.

Night train

Think about it: A drug is a chemical substance used to treat, cure, prevent or diagnose a disease. Drugs alter a body's chemistry in some way. Whether those drugs are sold over the counter or prescribed by a medical doctor, drugs can be dangerous and should be used with caution.

The mirror never lies

Adolescents are a vulnerable population for substance-use disorders based on multiple genetic and environmental risk factors. Unfortunately, the earlier a person uses a dangerous substance such as tobacco or alcohol, the more likely it is that a person will struggle with substance-use disorders in adulthood.

The substance use in the teenage years, which may begin as minimal or experimental use with minimal consequences, can progress in a subset of individuals to more serious substance-use disorders, such as substance abuse or dependence.

Source: Jason B. Fields, MD, medical services manager, DACCO and fellow in Addictions Medicine with the University of South Florida



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Analyzing advertisements
A drug is any non food substance that when put into the body changes the way the body or mind works. Physicians may prescribe legal drugs. Over-the-counter drugs may be purchased at drug stores or other retail stores. Newspapers, the Internet and television frequently contain advertising for drugs. Monitor the *Tampa Bay Times* and your favorite television station for a week. In your journal, write down each time you see an advertisement for a prescription or over-the-counter drug. As a consumer, do you think you are being bombarded with these advertisements? What is the message that is being conveyed in these advertisements? Do you think the ads are trying to persuade you to use the drugs advertised? Use specific examples from the advertisements to support your ideas.

Blurred lines

A teen brain is like a fast car with bad brakes! It's capable of learning and doing things quickly, but the parts that control decision-making and judgment are not completely developed. The American Medical Association reports that the brain goes through dynamic change during adolescence, and drugs can seriously damage long- and short-term growth processes. Frontal lobe development and the refinement of pathways and connections continue until age 16, and a high rate of energy is used as the brain matures until age 24!

The needle and the damage done

Simply put, prescription drug abuse is when someone takes a medication in an inappropriate way, such as:

- Without a prescription
- In a way other than as prescribed
- For the "high" elicited
- Taking a friend's or relative's prescription to treat pain or because you think it will help with studying

Opioids, central nervous system depressants and stimulants are the most commonly abused prescription drugs.

In addition, medications available without a prescription — known as over-the-counter drugs — also can be abused. Dextromethorphan, the active cough suppressant found in many over-the-counter cough and cold medications, is sometimes abused to get high. Abusers use dangerously high doses of this medication.

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse

**THINK
about it:**

Limbo

Every day in the United States, approximately 2,000 teenagers use prescription drugs without a doctor's guidance for the first time. As a matter of fact, 2.8 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds reported the nonmedical use of prescription medications in the past month, according to the 2012 Monitoring the Future survey. The results of this study showed that prescription and over-the-counter drugs are among the most commonly abused drugs by high school seniors, after alcohol, marijuana, spice and tobacco. Why do you think that is? Why would so many teens risk their health? Where do they get these drugs?

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse

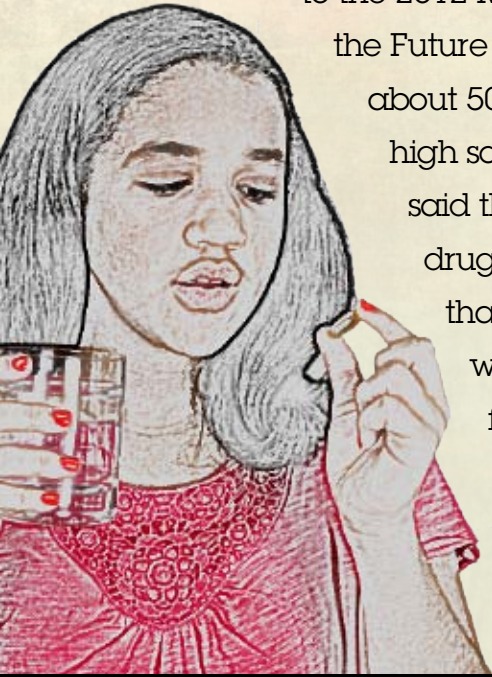


THE DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES OF PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE



The house that built me

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the majority of young adults obtain the prescription drugs they abuse from friends and relatives. And according to the 2012 Monitoring the Future survey, about 50 percent of high school seniors said that opioid drugs, other than heroin, would be fairly or very easy to get.



The eater of dreams

The Partnership at Drugfree.org and the MetLife Foundation released the Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS) in April 2013. According to the report:

- One in eight teens (13 percent or about 2.7 million) now reports that they have taken the stimulants Ritalin or Adderall when it was not prescribed for them.
- One in four teens (26 percent) believes that prescription drugs can be used as a study aid.
- Nearly one-third of parents say they believe prescription stimulants such as Ritalin or Adderall can improve a teen's academic performance even if the teen does not have ADHD.
- Almost one in four teens (23 percent) says their parents don't care as much if they are caught using prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription, compared to getting caught with illegal drugs.

Sources: The Partnership at Drugfree.org and the MetLife Foundation

Tightrope

One of the biggest side effects of prescription drug abuse is addiction. Drug addiction is a complex brain disease. It is characterized by compulsive, or

uncontrollable, drug craving, seeking and use that continues even in the face of extremely negative consequences. In other words, even if you are failing your classes, getting in trouble with law enforcement and/or your parents, the need for the drug will continue.

Drug seeking becomes compulsive, in large part as a result of the effects of prolonged drug use on brain functioning and on behavior. For many people, drug addiction becomes chronic, with relapses possible even after long periods of abstinence.



Wise up

If and how quickly you might become addicted to a drug depends on many factors, including your genes and the biology of your body. All drugs are potentially harmful and may have life-threatening consequences associated with their use. There are also vast differences among individuals regarding sensitivity to various drugs. While one person may use a drug one or many times and suffer no ill effects, another person may be particularly vulnerable and overdose with the first use. There is no way of knowing in advance how someone may react.

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse

This place is a prison

Matthew Serra and Jamie Lynne Godette epitomize addictive behavior.

A state-ranked freestyle swimmer, Matthew Serra graduated from Seminole High School in 1998 and from the Virginia Military Institute in 2002. To the outside world, he had it all. Serra, who first used illegal drugs when he was 13, became addicted to painkillers after a back injury in high school. He spent the remainder of his short life in and out of rehab battling an internal monster he could not control. Serra lost his difficult battle with prescription drug

addiction at the age of 28, dying from an overdose combination of several prescription drugs.

Jamie Lynne Godette was a good student at Countryside High School. She was 17 when she took her first oxycodone pill for scoliosis. Three days after she graduated from high school, she moved out of her parents' house and broke off



contact with them. Worried about her daughter, Godette's mother, Lynne, tracked her down in a Walgreens bathroom, where Godette was shooting up oxycodone. Over the years, things seemed to improve for Godette, but she could never really beat the overwhelming addiction of the drugs. She died in 2011 of a heroine overdose.



“Opiates are the devil,”

Ms. Lee*, former drug addict, states. “Once they get ahold of you physically, you don’t know any other way. Your whole life revolves around trying to get them.”

A Tampa resident, Lee experimented with drugs when she was in high school. When she was in her early 20s, she started using opiates. She was quickly hooked and struggled with addiction for four or five years.

Lee says that she would do anything to get the drugs in order to avoid the pain of withdrawal, including lying, stealing and hurting people. “When you are addicted, there is no light at the end of the tunnel,” she notes.

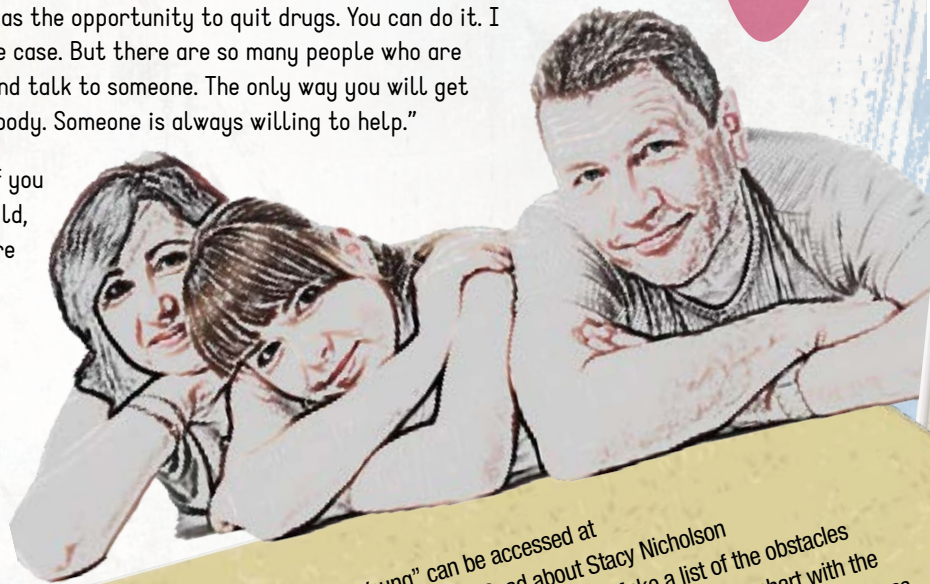
Drug free since December 2008, Lee’s life is completely different today. She defines herself as happy and self-reliant. Lee’s struggle to become drug free was not easy. After spending three months in jail, she was placed in a DACCO residential treatment program and, as a stipulation of her parole, attended Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings. She says the first step to getting clean is asking for help.

Lee notes there are many benefits to being clean. “I have it all and more,” she says. My family trusts me ... I have a life.” She says the key to her success in staying away from drugs is her support system. She credits her family, especially her father, for sticking by her side and never giving up on her.

Lee knows that not everyone has a support system at home, but she says there is help out there. “Everybody has the opportunity to quit drugs. You can do it. I thought I was that lone case. But there are so many people who are struggling. Reach out and talk to someone. The only way you will get help is to talk to somebody. Someone is always willing to help.”

Lee advises parents, “If you have a love for your child, never give up hope. There are resources out there for you, too.”

* Ms. Lee is a pseudonym



Dying young

The Tampa Bay Times special report “If I Die Young” can be accessed at tampabay.com/specials/2011/reports/addiction-recovery. Read about Stacy Nicholson as she struggled for sobriety in the epicenter of Florida’s pain pill crisis. Make a list of the obstacles Nicholson encounters and list the effects of those obstacles. Create a cause-and-effect chart with the information you have read. Also read the background story on Florida’s pill crisis. In your journal, discuss your thoughts about what you have read and what the implications of the information are regarding this crisis. Share your thoughts with your class. In a small group, create a mockup FaceBook group page focusing on this epidemic. Create a name for the group, a graphic or logo and a purpose. Create five posts to share with your new fans.

Learning with the Times

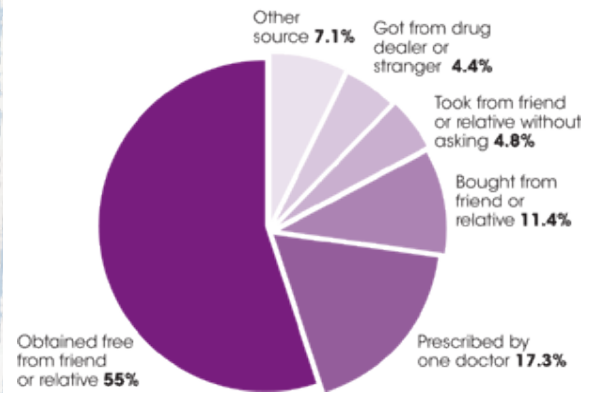


Think about it

Prescription medications are only prescribed from one doctor for one person or patient. A lot of thought and medical knowledge go into making a decision to prescribe painkillers. Asking for or accepting medications from anyone who knows very little about painkillers is only a recipe for danger. Below is a graph showing the sources of prescription painkillers. Most painkillers are distributed by people you know—and who should know better.

Source: Wassam Rahman, M.D., medical director, Division of Emergency Medicine, All Children’s Hospital

Where the drugs come from
People who abuse prescription painkillers get drugs from a variety of sources⁷



Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Parent pointer

When Lynne Knowles, Jamie Lynne Godette’s mother, thinks back to her daughter’s teenage years, she recalls that she knew her daughter was drinking and smoking marijuana, but she attributed that to a high school phase. She had no idea how bad things were. Knowles reminds parents that they need to be aware of what their children are doing and what is in their home medicine cabinets as well as their children’s friends’ homes medicine cabinets. Knowles advises parents to pay attention to the moment and not pretend the problem does not exist.

DEADLY CONSEQUENCES

Come undone

"Spencer, today your little brother stood before 500 students, teachers, principals, officers and others to tell them how much he misses you, how much he hurts every day by you not being here. He was horribly nervous, but you sent him signs last night and this morning that it would be all right. He's working to save other lives, so other little brothers don't have to miss their big brothers. We love you, Spencer. — Momma & Jamie"

Michele Phillips, Sept. 18, 2012, NOPE Memorial



Spencer Foster was a typical kid. Every year he and his brother, Jamie Phillips, would go with their mother, Michele Phillips, to renaissance fairs and Busch Gardens. They spent their summers in Kentucky visiting family, skipping rocks and wading in creeks.

When Spencer turned 13 years old, he became a typical teenager. His mother says he started to push boundaries and then moved in with his father in Westchase. Spencer turned 14 years old on May 18, 2007. Less than six weeks later he died of a

lethal combination of prescription drugs and alcohol. Although it is not certain if he died alone, he was found alone with no friends in sight. His younger brother was 10 years old. The family was devastated.

"I hate to think he died alone, that his friends might have abandoned him out of fear," said Jaime, now a Bloomingdale High junior. "I hate that I couldn't have been there to keep him from doing something so stupid." Michele Phillips asserted that parents need to be vigilant about their children knowing who their friends and friends' parents are and what they are doing. "Listen to your kids," she said. "If they are behaving like teenagers, don't let them push you away. Be involved. Meet their friends. Talk to their teachers."

Now, five years later, Jamie and Michele spend time educating high school students about the dangers of prescription drugs. They have formed a Hillsborough County NOPE (Narcotics Overdose Prevention & Education) task force. They speak and participate in the annual NOPE Candlelight Vigil. Jaime plans on speaking at as many of the high schools as he can.

"Spencer's death has had a huge impact on our lives and will continue to do so as long as we live," he said. "I talk to my friends and my teammates about what happened. I don't hide from it."


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Poison was the cure

View the *Tampa Bay Times* multimedia report "Deadly Combinations" at tampabay.com/specials/2008/reports/drug-deaths/index.shtml. View the videos and read the articles. Write down your thoughts about what you have read in your journal. What idea made the biggest impression on you? Why? Create a song or video based on the information that made the biggest impact on you. Share your video or song with your class.

Playing in the shadows



“Landon lived life to the fullest. He loved music, the Florida Gators and extreme sports. Landon was always the friend making jokes and smart comments; his humor abounded. He is missed by his family and many friends.”

— NOPE Memorial

next day. At noon, she went into his room to check on him. She found him sitting on his futon, unresponsive. Landon was transported to Helen Ellis Memorial Hospital, where he was pronounced dead just before 2 p.m. that day.

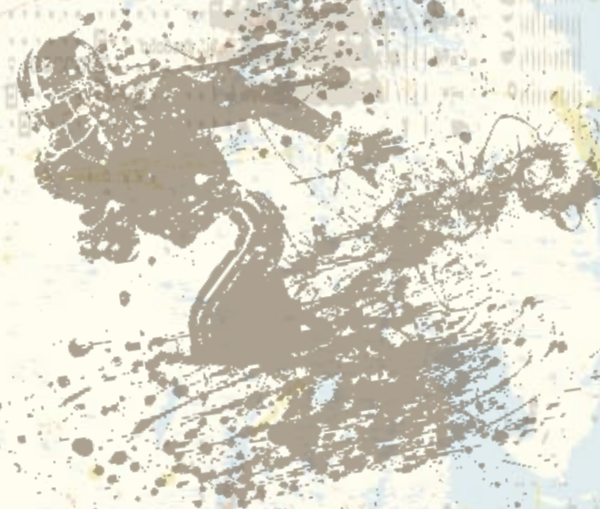
He was 17 years old.

According to the Pinellas-Pasco Medical Examiner’s Office, Landon died from an accidental overdose of the prescription painkiller hydrocodone. In addition, Alprazolam, also known as Xanax, contributed to his death. Landon was one of two Palm Harbor University High students to die of accidental overdoses in a three-month span.

Susan Korabek says her son did not have a drug habit. She believes that this incident was the first time her son took drugs.

Although she states that the decision to take the drugs was Landon’s, she tells young people that friends need to step up and reach out, if they suspect a peer is using or contemplating using drugs. She stresses the point that using drugs “one time can kill.”

After Landon’s death, Korabek and her husband decided to join NOPE and speak to young people and parents about the dangers of prescription drug abuse. “My husband and I couldn’t sit back and do nothing,” she states. She wants to plant the seeds in young people’s minds to make the right choices, “even if I can just reach one kid.”



Korabek notes that many parents are so focused on marijuana and alcohol that they do not talk to their children about prescription drugs. She advises parents to “talk to your kids; be alert to your kids’ friends and get educated.” She reminds parents and children that this can happen to anybody’s family.

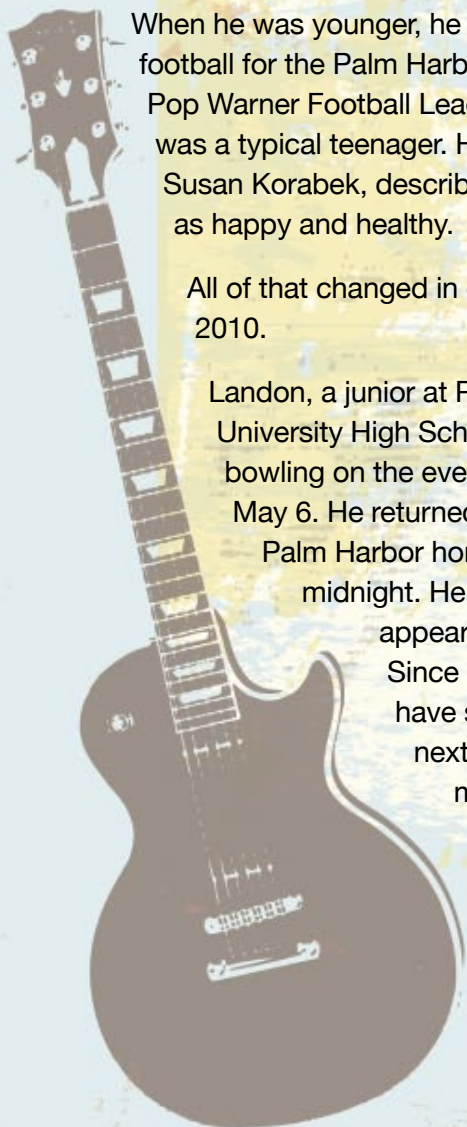
Korabek says that a big challenge with these drugs is that they are sitting on people’s counters. “What we tell parents is that they should lock up their medications. Most kids get drugs from anyone’s home. Kids think that because it’s a prescription drug, then it’s okay.” Korabek advises parents to hide their medications or dispose of them at a prescription drop-off site.

Korabek reminds people that it is okay to ask for help. “Reach out to somebody before it becomes too late.” If parents suspect their children are abusing drugs, they can seek help from a professional. “When a kid is reaching out, get help.”

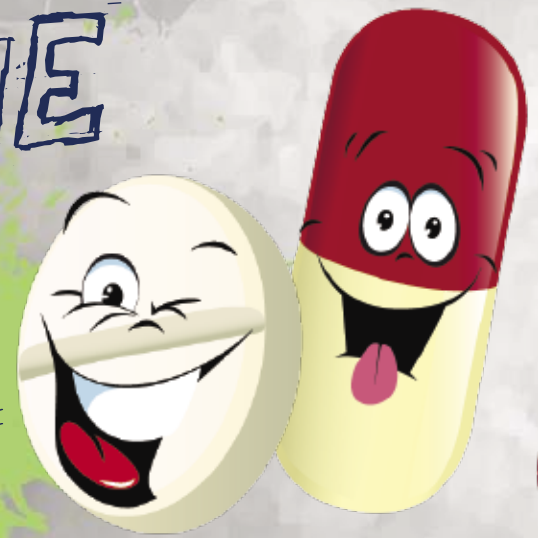
Landon Korabek enjoyed playing the guitar, skateboarding and surfing. When he was younger, he played football for the Palm Harbor Panthers Pop Warner Football League. Landon was a typical teenager. His mother, Susan Korabek, describes her son as happy and healthy.

All of that changed in early May 2010.

Landon, a junior at Palm Harbor University High School, went bowling on the evening of May 6. He returned to his Palm Harbor home about midnight. He did not appear intoxicated. Since he didn’t have school the next day, his mom let him sleep in the



DON'T BELIEVE THE hype



I KNEW YOU WERE TROUBLE

MYTH: If it's a prescription, it must be safe. You can't get addicted to something your doctor prescribes.

FACT: Although many medications are perfectly safe if taken in the prescribed dosage for a short period of time, prolonged use can be dangerous and addictive.

MYTH: Natural drugs are safer than synthetic ones.

FACT: Marijuana, mushrooms and other "natural" drugs still alter brain chemistry and produce dangerous side effects.

MYTH: Drug addiction is a choice.

FACT: Drug use is a choice. Prolonged use changes your body and brain chemistry. When that happens, the user no longer appears to have a choice — this is when use and misuse become addiction.

MYTH: If you have a stable job and family life or if you are getting good grades in school, you're not addicted.

FACT: You may have a job or career, a loving spouse and kids, and still have a drug or alcohol problem. You can get good grades in school, participate in clubs and athletics, have a lot of friends and still be a drug addict.

MYTH: Detox is a cure for addiction.

FACT: Detox is difficult and it's just the beginning. Detox is the first step toward recovery, but addiction is a chronic illness — like diabetes, asthma or hypertension — and it needs to be managed for the rest of your life. There is no cure.

MYTH: Addicts are bad people.

FACT: Addicts are not bad people trying to become good people. They are sick people trying to get well.

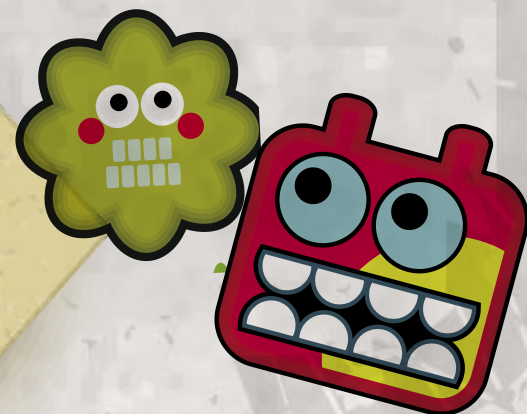
Source: Deni Carise, Ph.D., chief clinical officer, Phoenix House



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Responsibility and respect in action

It is important to know the warning signs and symptoms of drug abuse. If you suspect your friend or sibling is abusing prescription drugs, get help. Talk to your friend or sibling. Speak with a trusted adult. Don't be a bystander. Become a role model. Becoming a role model for another person is a great way to influence good behavior. Look in the *Tampa Bay Times* and find a person who is a good role model. You might even find good examples on the comic pages. Make a list of reasons why this individual is a good role model. Next, pretend you are going to interview this person for your school newspaper. Write out six questions that you would ask this person about being a role model. Trade questions with a friend and answer them as you think the role model would. Share your thoughts about this character with your class.



Tunnel vision



So now you know that when recommended for you by a doctor, prescription drugs can be beneficial. But when taken without a prescription or not as directed, they can be dangerous and addictive. At too high a dose, or when combined with alcohol or other drugs, many prescription drugs also can become deadly. Here are some specific facts about the most common categories of prescription drugs that are being abused: painkillers, depressants and stimulants.

Painkillers

often contain opioids that are either naturally derived from poppy flowers, or a lab-made, semi-synthetic substitute. These drugs attach to particular sites in the brain called opioid receptors, which carry messages to the brain. When you take prescription painkillers, the message the brain receives is changed, so that pain is no longer perceived as painful. The most commonly abused brand-name painkillers include Vicodin, OxyContin and Percocet. Codeine, an opioid painkiller often found in prescription cough syrup, is also commonly abused. A single large dose of a prescription painkiller can cause breathing difficulty that can lead to death. The short-term effects of painkiller abuse can include lack of energy, inability to concentrate, nausea and vomiting. Prescription painkillers can be highly addictive.



Depressants

are used to treat a variety of health conditions, such as anxiety, panic attacks and sleep disorders. Depressants can be divided into three groups: barbiturates, benzodiazepines, such as Valium and Xanax, and sleep medications, such as Ambien and Lunesta. In teens, depressants can cause depression, confusion, exhaustion and irritability. Since they work by slowing the brain's activity, they can diminish heartbeat and respiration to dangerously low levels. Combining prescription depressants with alcohol or over-the-counter medications can be fatal. Depressants are highly addictive drugs, and when chronic users or abusers stop taking them, they can experience severe withdrawal symptoms.



Stimulants

affect the brain through a slow and steady release of two neurotransmitters — dopamine and norepinephrine. When prescribed and taken correctly, under medical supervision, these drugs can help treat a few health conditions, including attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), narcolepsy and, occasionally, depression. Common brand-name prescription stimulants include Adderall, Ritalin, Dexedrine and Benzedrine. Excessive vomiting, tremors, sweating and anxiety are just some of the risks of abusing stimulants. When taken at high doses, with alcohol or with over-the-counter medicines, stimulants can cause irregular heartbeat, dangerously high body temperatures and the potential for seizures or heart failure. Stimulants can be addictive. The more you take, the easier it is to get hooked.



Think about it

The number of emergency department visits related to prescription medications has increased over the last decade. This is reflective of the availability of these medications through prescriptions for pain and anxiety. The CDC report from 2010 shows that from 2004 to 2008 there was a 111 percent increase in emergency department visits related to non medicinal use of opioid analgesics. This number continues to climb with fatal results. If individuals understood the dosing and adverse effects of each prescribed narcotic or benzodiazepine either taken alone, in combination with each other or alcohol, there would be fewer visits to emergency departments. This is not the case unless you are under the guided care of the prescriber. Most individuals do not intend to hurt themselves. They do not realize the consequences of their actions. Beliefs that more is better and that one pill cannot hurt are myths that get people in trouble. No one should share their medication (regardless of type) with anyone else. "Here, take one of my pain medications for your headache" is not acceptable.

Source: Wassam Rahman, M.D., medical director, Division of Emergency Medicine, All Children's Hospital

Parent pointer

How can you tell if your child is abusing drugs?
Here are some tips:

- Difficulty falling asleep, insomnia, inappropriate napping
- Significant weight loss or gain
- Changes in friends
- Lack of personal cleanliness, messy appearance
- Red eyes and frequent use of eye drops
- Runny nose, congestion, coughing
- Pale face, circles under eyes
- Abrupt changes in mood
- Hostility, defiance of rules
- Lack of responsibility, blaming, lying, making excuses
- Loss of memory, shortened attention span, disordered thought patterns
- Withdrawal from family, isolation, secretiveness
- Changes in school or job performance

Think about it

Even when medicines are prescribed by a doctor, it does not mean they are safe — even for the patient for whom they have been prescribed. All medicines have negative effects, some potentially dangerous. When a medicine is prescribed for a patient, the prescribing physician feels that the benefit that drug can offer the patient outweighs the risk of taking the medicine. And the physician prescribes an appropriate amount for that particular patient and will monitor for side effects.

Parents need to take stock of prescription medicines in the house. Get rid of any medicines that are not needed and lock up any remaining medicines. A survey done by the Partnership at Drugfree.org showed that more than 40 percent of teens take prescription drugs from their parents' medicine cabinet.

A common myth about stimulants is that they can improve academic performance in any student and are used as a "study aid." In fact, they do not improve performance or focusing in individuals that do not have ADHD or ADD. But they can cause harm.

Sources: Kristen Danielson, M.D., hospitalist, All Children's Hospital

"In life you are going to make many tough decisions. Falling into the peer pressure of trying and using prescription pills is only going to lead you into a life of despair and sadness."

— Pasco County Sheriff Chris Nocco

Parent pointer

Think about your home. What prescription and over-the-counter drugs do you have? Where are they kept? Would you know if some were missing? Here are some steps you can take to keep your teen drug free:

- Safeguard all drugs at home.
- Monitor quantities and control access.
- Set clear rules for teens about all drug use.
- Model safe and appropriate use of your own medicines.
- Talk to your teen about the dangers of abusing prescription and over-the-counter drugs. These are powerful drugs that, when misused, are just as dangerous as illegal street drugs.

Source: Parents. The Anti-Drug.

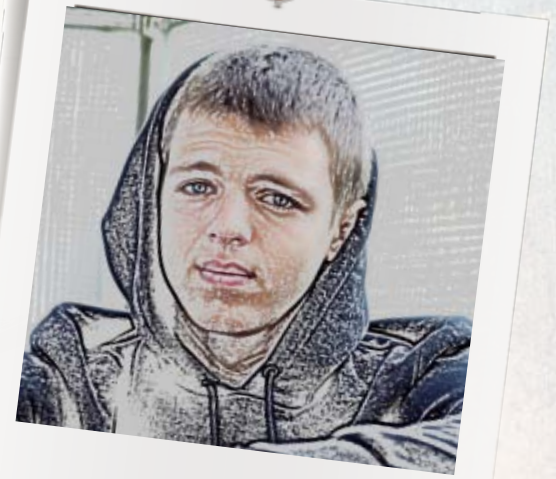
The POWER of peer pressure

Under pressure

Teenagers often encounter peer pressure in which they feel pressured to do things that may be harmful to them, such as abusing prescription drugs. Peer pressure can be hard to ignore and saying no isn't always easy.

It is important to fit in, but if you are worried that your friends won't like you if you say no, then maybe you should take a step back and examine the friendship. Real friends respect you as a person and would never stop being friends because you refuse to follow the crowd. Also, you may find out that some of your other friends feel the same way you do! If friends or classmates try to pressure you, keep in mind why they may be doing it:

- They may be trying to make you feel small, so that they can feel better about themselves.
- They may be afraid of anyone who is different from them.



- They may be insecure.
- They could be afraid of criticism, so they'll do the criticizing first.
- They could be making up rules so that they fit in and you don't.

Source: Public Broadcasting System

Safe and sound

Peer pressure is one of the main reasons young people start smoking, using drugs or drinking. But you do not have to fall for the pressure or the lies. It is important to remember these three statements when it comes to peer pressure: You don't have to do anything that you don't want to do. It's perfectly okay to say no. You don't owe anyone an explanation.

Source: Public Broadcasting System

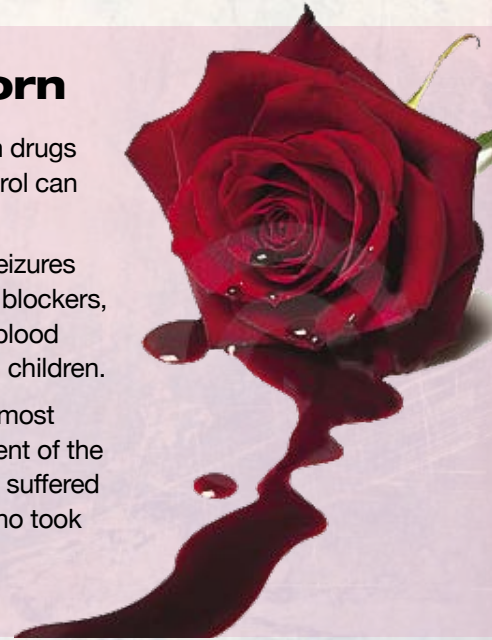
Every rose has its thorn

As noted on page 4, some popular prescription drugs that control diabetes, angina and high cholesterol can poison children and teens?

Diabetes pills, such as metformin, can cause seizures and death in someone who isn't diabetic. Beta blockers, such as atenolol, used to lower heart rate and blood pressure can be especially dangerous for small children.

After small children, teenagers were the group most likely to be harmed by these drugs. Thirty percent of the teenagers who took statins and went to the ER suffered serious injury, as did 40 percent of the teens who took opioids.

Source: National Public Radio (NPR)





UNDER THE BRIDGE

Picture this: You are at a party or a friend's house, and your friend is acting very sleepy. You know that he or she has taken some pills, but you don't want to get anyone in trouble. This is no time to hesitate. If you think someone is in distress, immediately call 911!

Symptoms of an overdose may include disorientation, drowsiness, clammy or damp skin, passing out or difficulty in waking. There may be no noticeable signs if someone suddenly stops breathing.

Call 911. Stay on the line with the operator and stay with the victim until help arrives. Try to remain calm and follow the directions of the 911 operator. Remember, calling 911 to save someone's life comes first and before any consequences you might face.

Your decision to react quickly can save someone's life. Any delay for any reason may result in a lifetime of regret for making the wrong choice.

Source: Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, Narcotics Division



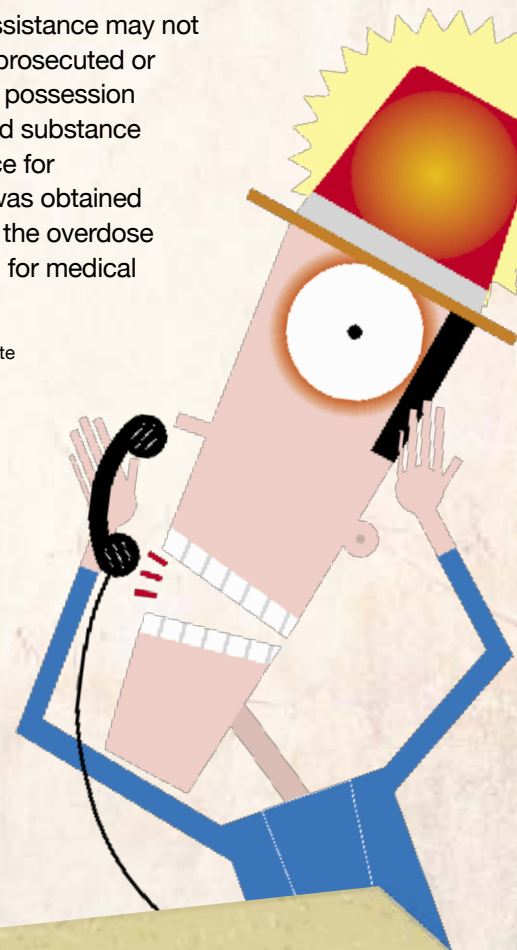
SAVE ME

The goal of the Good Samaritan Act is to save lives. This act allows witnesses of accidental drug overdoses to call for help without fearing that they will be arrested for drug possession.

• A person making a good faith effort to obtain or provide medical assistance for an individual experiencing a drug-related overdose may not be charged, prosecuted or penalized for possession of a controlled substance if the evidence for possession was obtained as a result of the person's seeking medical assistance.

• A person who experiences a drug-related overdose and is in need of medical assistance may not be charged, prosecuted or penalized for possession of a controlled substance if the evidence for possession was obtained as a result of the overdose and the need for medical assistance.

Source: Florida Senate



Master of puppets

Helping a friend not experiment with prescription drugs or break an addiction is hard work. You may feel a great deal of pressure to get your friend not to use drugs, or you may get discouraged if your efforts to convince your friend don't work.

But it is important to know that your friend's drug use is not your fault. Remember that it's ultimately up to your friend to make that change, and you can't do that for him or her.

Peer Pressure

Teenagers often encounter peer pressure in which they feel pressured to do things that may be harmful to them. Find an article in the *Tampa Bay Times* in which peer pressure may have played a role. In your journal, write about the peer pressure you see, read and hear about at your school and in your community. Explore why it is important for people to be prepared for situations where they may feel pressured to do something that may have negative effects on their lives. Write a letter to the editor focusing on the article from the newspaper and your journal points. Be sure to use specific examples from the article to support your ideas.

T
Learning
with
the Times

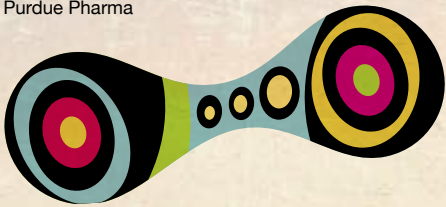


It really does take a village

BREAKING THE HABIT

- Taking any prescription medication that is not prescribed to you by a doctor is drug abuse, and it is dangerous.
- Medications are powerful drugs that can be very beneficial when taken properly under a doctor's supervision, but experimenting with prescription drugs — even once — can lead to an overdose or death.
- Online pharmacies can be dangerous places:
 - ◆ 95 percent of online pharmacies are operating illegally.
 - ◆ 94 percent of websites do not have a named verifiable pharmacist.
 - ◆ More than 90 percent of websites supply prescription medications without a prescription.
 - ◆ Approximately 50 percent of medications purchased online are counterfeit, in other words, fake.

Source: Purdue Pharma



WAKE ME UP

Narcotics Overdose Prevention & Education (NOPE) educates students in middle schools, high schools and colleges about the consequences of drug consumption. A network of community leaders goes into Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco counties' middle and high schools to deliver personal and blunt presentations, during which police officers explain the grim task of making death notifications to distraught families, and parents who lost children to drugs share their suffering.

NOPE offers similar presentations to parents so they know their children are often confronted about drugs at school bus stops, in school cafeterias, at movie theaters, at friends' homes and on their computers. Counselors and community leaders explain the signs of drug usage and the best ways to speak with kids about drugs.

Parents can ask questions and speak privately with the professionals. The presentations are given in schools, community centers, religious halls and living rooms of concerned parents.

For more information, go to nopetaskforce.org.

Save the day

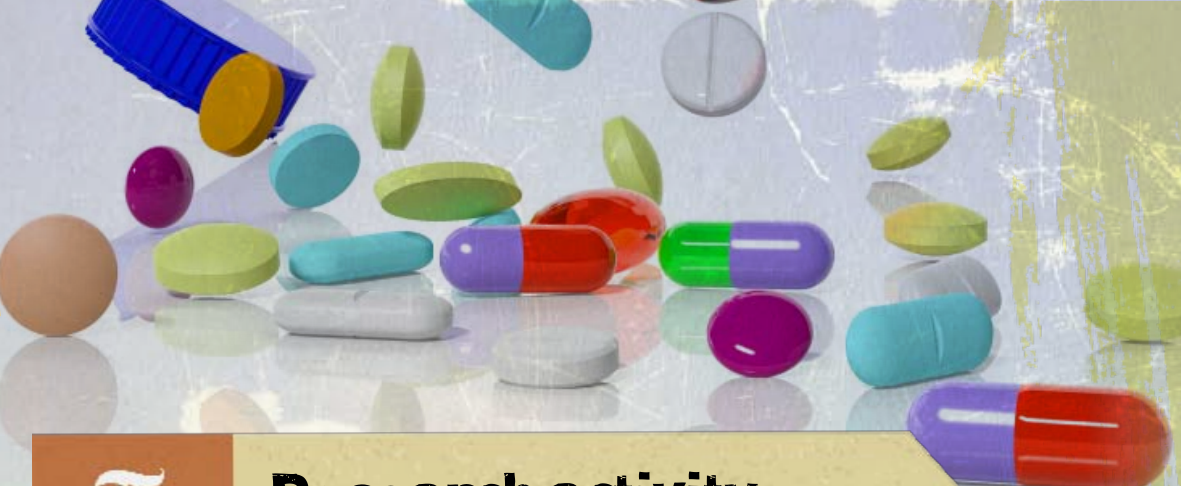
What is Nar-Anon? Nar-Anon is a 12-step program designed to help relatives and friends of addicts recover from the effects of coping with an addicted relative or friend. In this 12-step program, members offer help by sharing their experiences, strengths and hope. The only requirement for membership is that there be a problem of addiction involving a relative or friend. Joining is easy; just attend a meeting. There are no dues or fees. For more information in Florida, go to NarAnonFL.org or call 1-888-947-8885.



NOTHING TO LOSE

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- 2-1-1 Tampa Bay Cares Inc.: 211tampabay.org
- Be the Wall: bethewall.org
- Drug Free Florida: drugfreeflorida.org
- Faces and Voices of Recovery: facesandvoicesofrecovery.org
- Florida Alcohol and Drug Abuse Association: fadaa.org
- Florida Keep Kids Drug Free Foundation: kkdf.org
- Nar-Anon and Narateen: NarAnonFL.org
- Florida Poison Information Center: poisoncentertampa.org
- Center for Substance Abuse Prevention: prevention.samhsa.gov
- National Institute on Drug Abuse: nida.nih.gov
- National Institute on Drug Abuse for teens: teens.drugabuse.gov/peerx
- Office of National Drug Control Policy: whitehousedrugpolicy.gov
- Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration: samhsa.gov



Think about it

Research activity: Prescription Drug Monitoring Program



In 2011, Florida created a weapon meant to help stop the prescription drug epidemic that kills an average of more than six people a day in this state. *Tampa Bay Times* reporter John Cox writes, "Since then, anyone filling prescriptions for controlled substances such as OxyContin or Xanax has been required to record the details into a database known as the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program." And thus began the controversy.

It seems that since the inception of the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP), there have been reservations about how it will be implemented, if it is necessary, what the cost will be, what the legal ramifications are and how the PDMP might violate people's civil rights.

Your job is to research this topic using the Internet and *Tampa Bay Times* articles, write an argument essay either for or against the PDMP and then present your arguments in a class debate or mock civil rights trial. Not only do you need to research this topic, but you need to analyze whether or not the sources you use are considered credible.

Here are some links to get you started:

- tampabay.com/news/health/florida-drug-database-intended-to-save-lives-is-barely-used-by-doctors/1255062
- tampabay.com/news/politics/did-floridas-prescription-pill-database-really-spring-a-leak/2130108
- doh.state.fl.us/mqa/PDMP
- news-journalonline.com/article/20130612/NEWS/306129977
- articles.sun-sentinel.com/2013-05-02/news/sfl-lquick-editorial-prescription-drug-monitoring-program-20130502_1_database-state-lawmakers-florida-house
- fisheriffs.org/newsroom/entry/statement-from-fsa-regarding-florida-prescription-drug-monitoring-program

Be a hero.

Prescription drug abuse, according to the Center for Disease Control, has become a national epidemic. The Tampa Bay area and Florida have been particularly hard hit and have been the epicenter of this national scourge. But there is hope. The latest statistics available in 2012 reveal that 201 people died from drug overdoses in Pinellas County. Of these deaths, 135 were from prescription drug overdose alone. These numbers, although tragic and unacceptable, represent a 35 percent decrease in fatalities in the last two years. There is still much to do in regard to education to further decrease these numbers. Not all people who die are addicts. A single pill can sometimes kill! If you suspect someone you know or love is the victim of an overdose, dial 911 and get immediate help. From a medical perspective, opioid overdoses can usually be easily reversed with medication available in every emergency room. Your call to 911 can literally be lifesaving. **Be a hero!**

Sources: Bob Morelli, M.D., general pediatrician, All Children's Hospital

Parent pointer

Dispose of unused drugs

Is your medicine cabinet filled with expired drugs or medications you no longer use? How should you dispose of them?

Medicine take-back programs for disposal are a good way to remove expired, unwanted, or unused medicines from the home and reduce the chance that others may accidentally take the medicine. Contact your city or county government's household trash and recycling service to see if there is a medicine take-back program in your community and learn about any special rules regarding which medicines can be taken back. You also can talk to your pharmacist to see if he or she knows of other medicine disposal programs in your area, or visit the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration's website for information on National Prescription Drug Take-Back Events.



All Children's Hospital provides expert pediatric care for children and families from across the state of Florida. More than 250 physicians and 3,000 employees provide compassionate, state-of-the-art care for infants, children and teens with some of the most challenging medical problems.

As a member of Johns Hopkins Medicine, All Children's provides access to innovative treatments and therapies. Taking part in pediatric medical education and clinical research helps All Children's provide outstanding care in 50 pediatric specialties.

All Children's is the regional pediatric referral center for Florida's west coast and brings many outpatient services closer to children and families through All Children's Outpatient Care centers throughout the Tampa Bay region. All Children's staff also work with communities to provide education and advocacy in the areas of childhood asthma, childhood obesity and injury prevention. To learn more, go to allkids.org.

AMA Foundation

Founded in 1950, the American Medical Association (AMA) Foundation is the philanthropic voice of the AMA. The AMA Foundation advances public health and medical scholarships through philanthropic support of physician-directed initiatives. Their vision is to be the center of philanthropic activity that enables the medical community to help people lead healthier lives.

ACTIVITIES

Making a difference

The National Institute on Drug Abuse asserts that the more you know about prescription drug abuse and the science behind it, the more you'll want to help your friends learn the facts and make smart decisions. The National Institute on Drug Abuse has developed some tools to help you spread the word and make a positive difference in the lives of your peers. Check out the activity guide at teens.drugabuse.gov/peerx/get-involved. Or, you can download the PDF guide at teens.drugabuse.gov/sites/default/files/NIDA_PEERx_ActGuide_Form.pdf. Have your class break up into small groups and choose one of the activities to complete and share with your class and school.

Going beyond the text

Go back through this publication and make a list of all of the article titles (headlines). Did you notice that all of the headlines are song titles?

Investigate each title. Find the original song.

- What is the main idea of the song?
- How does the title develop the meaning of the song?
- What is the main idea of the text?
- How does the title develop the meaning of the text?
- Was the title of the article a good word choice? Why or why not? If not, what would you title the article?

With a partner or a small group, create a report based on the information you have learned and your ideas. Share your results and thoughts with your class.

Media analysis

Examine this essential question: How does the media portray prescription drugs? Give examples of movies, television shows, music, newspapers or magazines that show the use of prescription drugs. Based on what you have learned, write an editorial responding to the essential question. Be sure to use specific examples to support your points.

IN THE KNOW. IN THE TIMES.

The Tampa Bay Times Newspaper in Education (NIE) program is a cooperative effort between schools and the Times to promote the use of newspapers in print and electronic form as educational resources. Our educational resources fall into the category of informational text.

Informational text is a type of nonfiction text. The primary purpose of informational text is to convey information about the natural or social world. And since the mid-1970s, NIE has provided schools with class sets of informational text in the form of the daily newspaper and our award-winning original curriculum, at no cost to teachers or schools.

In the Tampa Bay area each year, more than 5 million newspapers and electronic licenses are provided to teachers and students free of charge thanks to our generous individual, corporate and foundation sponsors. This program was funded by a grant from the American Medical Association Foundation in partnership with All Children's Hospital.

In addition to providing free supplemental materials to educators, NIE hosts free educator workshops and webinars. Our teaching materials cover a variety of subjects and are consistent with Florida's Next Generation Sunshine State Standards and Common Core Standards.

For more information about NIE, visit tampabay.com/nie or call 800-333-7505, ext. 8138. Follow us on Twitter at [Twitter.com/TBTimesNIE](https://twitter.com/TBTimesNIE) and check out the NIE Blogging Zone at tampabay.com/blogs/niezone.

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This publication incorporates the following Next Generation Sunshine

State Standards: Health: HE.6.B.3.1-3; HE.6.C.1.1-3; HE.6.C.1.7; HE.6.C.2.1-2; HE.6.C.2.7; HE.7.B.2.2-3; HE.7.C.1.1-3; HE.7.C.1.7; HE.7.C.2.1-3; HE.7.P.1.1; HE.8.B.2.1-3; HE.8.C.1.1-3; HE.8.C.1.7; HE.8.C.2.1-3; HE.912.B.2.1-3; HE.912.C.1.1-3; HE.912.C.1.7; HE.912.C.2.1-3 **Language Arts:** LA.6.1.5.1; LA.6.1.6.1-10; LA.6.1.7.1-8; LA.6.2.2.1-5; LA.6.3.1.1-3; LA.6.3.2.1-3; LA.6.3.3.1-4; LA.6.3.4.1-5; LA.6.3.5.1-3; LA.6.4.2.1; LA.6.4.3.1-2; LA.6.5.2.1-2; LA.6.6.1.1-3; LA.6.6.4.1-2; LA.7.1.5.1; LA.7.1.6.1-11; LA.7.1.7.1-8; LA.7.2.2.1-5; LA.7.3.1.1-3; LA.7.3.2.1-3; LA.7.3.3.1-4; LA.7.3.4.1-5; LA.7.4.2.1; LA.7.4.3.1-2; LA.7.5.2.1-3; LA.7.6.4.1-2; LA.8.1.5.1; LA.8.1.6.1-11; LA.8.1.7.1-8; LA.8.2.2.1-5; LA.8.3.1.1-3; LA.8.3.2.1-3; LA.8.3.3.1-4; LA.8.3.4.1-5; LA.8.4.2.1; LA.8.4.3.1-2; LA.8.5.2.1-5; LA.8.6.4.1-2; LA.910.1.5.1; LA.910.1.6.1-11; LA.910.1.7.1-8; LA.910.2.2.1-5; LA.910.3.1.1-3; LA.910.3.2.1-3; LA.910.3.3.1-4; LA.910.3.4.1-5; LA.910.4.2.1; LA.910.4.3.1-2; LA.910.5.2.1-5; LA.910.6.4.1-2; LA.1112.1.5.1; LA.1112.1.6.1-11; LA.1112.1.7.1-8; LA.1112.2.2.1-5; LA.1112.3.1.1-3; LA.1112.3.2.1-3; LA.1112.3.3.1-4; LA.1112.3.4.1-5; LA.1112.4.2.1; LA.1112.4.3.1-2; LA.1112.5.2.1-5; LA.1112.6.4.1-2

This publication can be applied to the following Common Core Standards:

Reading informational text: RI.6.1; RI.6.2; RI.6.3; RI.6.7; RI.6.9; RI.7.1; RI.7.2; RI.7.3; RI.7.7; RI.7.9; RI.8.1; RI.8.2; RI.8.3; RI.8.7; RI.8.9 **Writing:** W.6.1; W.6.2; W.6.3; W.6.4; W.6.5; W.6.7; W.6.8; W.6.9; W.7.1; W.7.2; W.7.3; W.7.4; W.7.5; W.7.7; W.7.8; W.7.9; W.8.1; W.8.2; W.8.3; W.8.4; W.8.5; W.8.7; W.8.8; W.8.9; W.9-10.1; W.9-10.2; W.9-10.3; W.9-10.4; W.9-10.5; W.9-10.7; W.9-10.8; W.9-10.9; W.11-12.1; W.11-12.2; W.11-12.3; W.11-12.4; W.11-12.5; W.11-12.7; W.11-12.8; W.11-12.9 **Speaking & listening:** SL.6.1; SL.6.2; SL.6.4; SL.7.1; SL.7.2; SL.7.4; SL.8.1; SL.8.2; SL.8.4; SL.9-10.1; SL.9-10.2; SL.9-10.4; SL.11-12.1; SL.11-12.2; SL.11-12.4 **Language:** L.6.1; L.6.2; L.6.3; L.6.4; L.7.1; L.7.2; L.7.3; L.7.4; L.8.1; L.8.2; L.8.3; L.8.4; L.9-10.1; L.9-10.2; L.9-10.3; L.9-10.4; L.11-12.1; L.11-12.2; L.11-12.3; L.11-12.4

