

MEDIA RELEASE

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Okay to Drive? Your Prescription Medication and Driving Ventura County Raises Awareness for the Hazards of Medicated Driving

(OXNARD, Calif.) – In 2014 \$374 billion was spent on prescription drugs in the United State, over \$1,100.00 per person. Two out of three adults, aged 65 and above, used five or more medication daily. While not all of these medications impair a person's ability to drive, the use of these drugs has led Ventura County Behavioral Health to take the proactive step of bring awareness about the issue. Prescription drug impaired driving can diminish an individual's performance behind the wheel and pose the risks of harm to a driver or an innocent bystander.

"We are working within the community, to raise awareness and let people know about how prescription medication can affect their ability to operate a vehicle." Patrick Zarate, Division Manager, Alcohol and Drug Program stated, "Not long ago we only thought of alcohol when it came to driving under the influence, but the reality is that a DUI is for any drug that reduces your ability to drive."

As the holiday season approaches many people will be on the road to see family members and loved ones. Traffic, distractions, and medications can reduce focus for drivers on the road, Ventura County Behavioral Health is letting older adults know about the possible danger they are putting themselves and other loved ones in.

"The new campaign material speaks to the social cost that prescription drug impaired driving can impose on a community." David Tovar, the OTS Grant Coordinator affirmed, "We are aiming to change behaviors before someone is hurt, or even worse, killed. It only takes a minute to talk with your doctor or pharmacist about how the drugs you have been prescribed can diminish your ability to drive. Find out how to protect yourself and others before anyone is harmed."

The campaign material created declares that taking medication and driving is like playing roulette, you could be gambling with other's lives if you get behind the wheel. The messaging states that you should never mix prescription medication with alcohol, or change your dosage without consulting your medical professional first.

For more information about the grant, contact David Tovar at (805) 981-9115 or David.Tovar@Ventura.org. Funding for the grant is from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. For more information, go to www.venturaountylimits.com.

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