Nearly half of young people who abuse heroin reported misusing Rx opioids before starting heroin.

People who are addicted to Rx opioids are 40 times more likely to become addicted to heroin.

REDUCING SUPPLY
+
REDUCING DEMAND
=
SAVING LIVES

Addressing the Twofold Epidemic of Rx Painkiller and Heroin Abuse

The Ventura County Rx Abuse & Heroin Workgroup was developed in early 2012 in response to the escalating opioid epidemic, part of a nationwide crisis that crosses boundaries and demographics. Opioids have been the most widely-prescribed painkillers for many years, while heroin is an illegal street opioid that is lower cost for a comparable high. Both are extremely addictive, driving the transition for many prescription opioid abusers to the cheaper, more readily available heroin.

Ventura County’s opioid abuse response can be meaningfully focused through a supply-and-demand model first suggested by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and tailored for our local conditions and needs. Reducing the supply of opioids while also decreasing the demand for them, will lead to a greater possibility of improving and saving lives.

In this report, we highlight and share identified strategies and opportunities to reverse the trends which have led to this epidemic. We invite you to join us in connecting and enhancing resources to prevent and reduce prescription drug and heroin abuse. Together we can reduce opioid supply, reduce opioid demand, and save lives.
“With a 10-day supply of opioids, 1 in 5 people become long term users.”
– ANDREW KOLODNY, MD, PHYSICIANS FOR RESPONSIBLE OPIOID PRESCRIBING

Supporting Prescribers

Prescribers may underestimate the risks of opioid addiction while overestimating painkiller benefits. The Ventura County Rx Abuse & Heroin Workgroup offers prescribers, hospitals and clinics up-to-date information and training for safe prescribing and on-site patient education.

Safe prescriber education addresses the opioid epidemic by training prescribers to respond before opioids are prescribed.

When Opioids Are Used, Start Low and Go Slow:

- **Assess** pain and function
- **Consider** if non-opioid therapies are appropriate
- **Talk** to patients about treatment plan
- **Evaluate** risk of harm of misuses
- **Identify** drug misuse/addiction
- **Query** CURES 2.0 to confirm patient information

Risk of Continued Opioid Use Increases at 4–5 Days

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of days for initial opioid prescription</th>
<th>Likelihood of continuing to use opioids</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>Likelihood of dependency spikes here</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Hospitals unite on new pain medication policy for emergency departments. L. to R.: Dr. Julia Feig, Dr. Celia Woods, Dr. Neil Canby, Dr. Carlo Reyes, Dr. Anthony H. Ho, Dr. Thomas Duncan and Dr. Martin Ehrlich at Los Robles Hospital, Thousand Oaks, CA

Prescriber Training

Informational Mailings

Over 2500 Ventura County prescribers and dispensers of medication received multiple educational Rx RISK mailings and e-blasts to update them on best practices for prescribing opioids and to share CURES 2.0 registration tips.

Rx RISK Prescribers Portal

Expanded resources for prescribers, staff and patients about the problems and prevention of prescription drug abuse.

Almost 500 viewers sought information at the online Rx RISK portal and accessed information for their patients and practices.
Monitoring Prescriptions
with CURES 2.0

Local prescribers are registering and utilizing the CURES 2.0 (Controlled Substance Utilization Review and Evaluation System) at increasing rates. The interactive CURES database provides the highest level of prescription drug monitoring available. It discourages “doctor shopping,” reduces overprescribing, contains information on the prescribing and dispensing of controlled substances, including opioids, and protects patients who require painkiller medication.

Our objective is to encourage and facilitate CURES registration and utilization with local education, on-site training, and promotion.

The Ventura County Rx Abuse & Heroin Workgroup worked with local hospitals and medical groups on a focused registration campaign and saw CURES 2.0 registration increase from 18% to 45% in 6 months (November 2015–May 2016).

Our aim is 100% CURES utilization. Every patient, every time an opioid is prescribed.

FEATURED PARTNER
Ventura County Interagency Pharmaceutical Crimes Unit (PCU)

The Ventura County PCU, with members from the Ventura County Sheriff’s Office, Simi Valley Police Department, Thousand Oaks Police Department, CA Highway Patrol, CA Division of Investigation, and the CA Department of Health Care Services, is on track to meet its goal of developing innovative approaches to dealing with the opioid epidemic.
Measuring What Matters

The Ventura County Rx Abuse & Heroin Workgroup began tracking and analyzing prescription opioid and heroin data at its inception in 2012. In 2014, local Trend Data at a Glance 2008–2014 was first published, presenting relevant indicators that established the baselines for measuring and responding to the multifaceted opioid crisis.

The workgroup remains committed to supporting ongoing data analysis to guide and evaluate collaborative actions addressing Rx and heroin abuse. Special local research has included youth treatment program participants, the jail inmate population, drug-impaired driving statistics, and analysis of overdose deaths.

Best Practice

“Unless we know where we stand, we’re not going to be able to continuously improve.”

– Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Rx Drug Abuse & Heroin Summit, Atlanta, 2016

Overdose Deaths in Ventura County – Key Findings

To increase the Ventura County Rx & Heroin Workgroup’s understanding of fatal overdoses, research specialist Kayleigh Hunnicutt, MA, MEd, examined countywide data provided by the Ventura County Medical Examiner Office. Following are a few select findings from the in-depth study, Ventura County Overdose Deaths 2008-2014. This report has become an important part of a broader discussion of prevention and interventions within our region.

1. Prescription drugs account for most overdose deaths (63%), far above other substance categories (25% alcohol-related, 24% heroin-related, and 18% illicit drug-related).

2. The majority of overdose deaths were opioid-related, either heroin or opioid Rx drugs.

3. Most of the overdose deaths were due to the use of multiple substances. 68% consumed two or more different substances. Only 32% of overdose deaths were related to an overdose of one single substance.

4. Overdose deaths were primarily accidental (76% to 86% during 2008–2014) compared with 14% to 24% intentional or suicidal overdose.

5. The patterns of overdose deaths vary by county geographic region, calling for further jurisdictional analysis and recommendations.

Prescription drugs account for most overdose deaths (63%), far above other substance categories:

- 25% alcohol-related
- 24% heroin-related
- 18% illicit-drug related

Annual number of Ventura County overdose deaths from 2008–2014, by broad categories (N=754)
Protecting Youth & Family

Those initiating nonmedical use of prescription opioids at ages 10-12 years had the highest risk of transitioning to heroin use.

JOURNAL OF PEDIATRICS (2015)

The countywide report of the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) indicates a hopeful decline in Lifetime Misuse of Rx drugs. However, prevention of Rx drug and heroin abuse continues to be a challenge for Ventura County youth and their families, and a focal point of the workgroup.

CHKS ASKS: During your life, how many times have you used Rx painkillers, tranquilizers or sedatives to get “high” for reasons other than medical?

The BreakThrough Student Assistant Program helps students and their families to navigate through the school system safely and successfully. BreakThrough welcomes middle or high school students and families in the Conejo Valley Unified School District to take advantage of unique systems of care to maximize health and minimize harms.

“One key accomplishment was having an active multi-agency collaboration to focus on student well-being. It’s having a focus on prevention and not disease. Everyone is looking through the lens of keeping kids in school.”

— Project BreakThrough Leader

Ventura County Friday Night Live Mentoring

Friday Night Live, Club Live, & Friday Night Live Kids are youth-led, youth-driven programs designed for Ventura County high school, middle school, and elementary school aged youth. The collective effect of youth-serving organizations combines leadership with innovative delivery of alcohol and other drug prevention and education.

BUZZ KILL, a two-site pilot program for site-specific Rx drug and heroin prevention and education, introduced the risks of sharing medication: Share Today. Gone Tomorrow.

Data-driven and youth focus group-informed graphic novels and posters developed by students. Formative evaluation initiated to measure goal of 25% reduction in 30-day opioid use.

The text said ‘cool pilz @prty.’ Oxys made me feel good and for a while I got them free from friends. I liked being high, but then I needed more and more pills every day just to feel normal. I started buying them, which took all my money and whatever I could steal. When a friend called up and got us some heroin, it was way cheaper than pills and as easy as ordering pizza. I was totally hooked.
"Not only is there lower drug-seeking behavior, but patients express appreciation for the care taken."

– CLINIC STAFF AFTER “WE CHECK” LAUNCH

The Ventura County Rx Abuse & Heroin Workgroup collaborates with local partners to increase community awareness of the risks of opioid misuse and engage support for safe and secure disposal.

WE CHECK because WE CARE

Patients, family members and prescribers all benefit from WE CHECK policy and messaging starting at the clinic door. Eye-catching decals remind that public health and safety increase when prescription histories are verified.

PLANE OF PILLS
Media Event 2016

To earn media attention and spread the word about the epidemic of painkiller overdoses, the workgroup Chair Patrick Zarate hosted a press event to unveil the Plane of Pills campaign. Featuring concerns by the CA Department of Justice and the Ventura County Sheriff’s Office, resulting stories in local papers, radio and social media increased awareness of the enormity of the painkiller overdose problem.

Safe and Secure RX DRUG DISPOSAL

Recent data continue to support the need for ongoing and expanded availability of Rx drug disposal programs.

- 1 in 5 Ventura County teens have abused prescription drugs.
- Over 50% get them for free from friends and family.
- 73% of Ventura County residents surveyed indicated that prescription drugs, for uses not as prescribed, are “fairly easy” or “very easy” for teenagers to obtain.

APRIL 2017

Ventura County Board of Supervisors upheld Every Day is Take Back Day, with a resolution pledging continued safe and secure drug disposal.

Since 2009, over 16 tons of Rx drugs have been collected and destroyed by the Ventura County Rx Abuse & Heroin Workgroup partners in the Ventura County Sheriff’s Office.

Source: Ventura County Sheriff’s Office, February 2017

Nearly 1 in 5 Ventura County residents have dropped off unused or expired Rx drugs at a County disposal bin.

Source: Ventura County Community Health Survey, 2014-15
Preventing Overdose

Naloxone is a safe and legal antidote to reverse an opioid overdose. It neutralizes the opioids (prescription pain meds, heroin or methadone), reverses the possible fatal side effects and helps someone breathe again.

The NO OD overdose prevention project works to educate family, friends, and loved ones about opioid overdose prevention. Targeted to groups at elevated risk for overdose, data collection helps to guide education and distribution.

The Rx & Heroin Workgroup, in partnership with Project SAFER, provides outreach and training, as well as rescue kits, to the Ventura County community.

LOCAL RESULTS
• **887** overdose rescue kits distributed countywide
• **22** distribution/education sites
• **100** lives saved!

#1 Reason for Overdose:
99% Reported OD Due to Heroin (by itself or in combination with other drugs)

Overall, what impact has participating in this program had on your drug use?

- **57%** Decreased use
- **9%** Increased use
- **6%** No impact
- **28%** N/A

Source: Overdose Prevention Program Data Update, Evalcorp 2017

For information about getting a free OVERDOSE RESCUE KIT:
Call **(805) 667-NO-OD**

Naloxone can reverse ODs caused by opioid drugs (heroin, prescription pain meds or methadone).
Moving Forward

The workgroup is proud to present this report, renewing our initial goals, objectives and activities first outlined in Ventura County Responds.* We are encouraged by the strength of our interagency collaboration which has expanded its membership to engage partners throughout the county system and the community.

Moving forward, target actions with measurable outcomes will include:

- Multiply the number and convenience of Rx disposal sites
- Identify and develop new entry points for treatment services
- Increase access to Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)
- Expand overdose prevention training and naloxone kit availability
- Raise the perception of opioid harms, especially for youth
- Present the HEROIN HERE 2017 conference to increase professional and community knowledge

Together we can:

REDUCE OPIOID SUPPLY, REDUCE OPIOID DEMAND and SAVE LIVES

REFERENCES


BEST PRACTICE

“In the face of the statistics of our opioid epidemic, one of the most important elements is immeasurable — the element of hope. As the Ventura County Rx Abuse & Heroin Workgroup marks its fifth year of multiagency collaboration, there are signs of progress and of hope — for healthy lives, healthy families, and a healthier community.”

— PATRICK ZARATE, WORKGROUP CHAIR
COO, VENTURA COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
DIVISION MANAGER, ALCOHOL & DRUG PROGRAMS

REDUCING SUPPLY

Support Prescribers
- Safe prescribing guidelines for pain
- Prescriber training
- Easy access to online toolkits

Monitor Prescriptions
- Promote CURES 2.0 PDMP
- Partner with law enforcement to reduce diversion
- Expand safe & secure Rx drug disposal

Measure What Matters
- Use data to track and evaluate supply chain impacts
- Analyze PDMP data provided by CURES 2.0

REDUCING DEMAND

Protect Youth & Family
- Raise perception of youth harms
- Reduce the age of first use
- Support school-based initiatives

Inform the Community
- Increase awareness of opioid risks and benefits
- Promote secure medication and safe Rx disposal
- Improve treatment opportunities

Prevent Overdose
- Increase availability of OD prevention with Narxone kits
- Disseminate NO OD information
VENTURA COUNTY RX ABUSE & HEROIN WORKGROUP

MISSION: Save and improve lives by stopping prescription drug and heroin abuse.

PRIMARY GOAL: Decrease fatal opioid overdoses by 50% in Ventura County, compared to 2013 baseline.

CRITERIA FOR GOALS:
The selected goals and actions reflect:

• Data-indicated problems
• Defined scope and reach
• Measurable efficacy
• Agency leadership and responsibility
• Achievability
• Crosscutting strategies
• Cultural and linguistic relevance
• Sensitivity to stigma

TARGETS FOR ACTION
The Prescription Drug and Heroin Abuse Workgroup remains committed to parallel target areas based on countywide conditions and the alliance of a strong multiagency partnership.

Professional Development
Goal: Expand professional training and development across all sectors.

Enforcement and Security
Goal: Support law enforcement, monitoring and security to enhance public safety by deterring drug misuse, abuse and diversion.

Education and Awareness
Goal: Increase outreach and education for parents, patients and public to raise awareness of prescription drug abuse and heroin problems and solutions.

Safe Schools
Goal: Collaborate with schools, PTAs and Ventura County Office of Education (VCOE) to increase communication channels and prevention opportunities for teachers, parents, and students and school personnel.

Prevention Policy and Research
Goal: Advance continued research and data analysis to develop key policy actions addressing Rx and heroin abuse.

In addition to the above named agencies, the Rx Drug & Heroin Workgroup extends its thanks to the many local, state and regional collaborators who have participated in our multiagency efforts, including Dr. Roneet Lev of San Diego Safe Prescribing and Mr. Mike Small of the State of California Department of Justice.

Patrick Zarate, Chair
COO, Ventura County Behavioral Health
Division Manager, Alcohol & Drug Programs

PARTNERSHIP AGENCIES
VCBH Alcohol and Drug Programs (ADP)
ADP Prevention Services
American Medical Response, Ventura County Division
Behavioral Health Advisory Board
Community Memorial Health System
Gold Coast Health Plan
Los Robles Hospital and Medical Center
Project SAFER
Santa Paula West Medical Clinic and Pediatrics
Ventura County Health Care Agency
Ventura County Interagency Pharmaceutical Crimes Unit
Ventura County Medical Center
Ventura County Medical Examiner Office
Ventura County Office of Education
Ventura County Probation Agency
Ventura County Probation Agency, Juvenile Hall
Ventura County Public Health Department
Ventura County Sheriff’s Office

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HEROIN HERE

Coping with the heroin and opioid crisis in Ventura County

CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 2017

http://my.yapp.us/HEROINHERE