



D15 Controlled Prescription Drugs Commonly Associated With Pain Management: Evidence Analyzed by State and Local Crime Laboratories in the United States From 2004 to 2006

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have an enhanced understanding of prescription drug seizures of diverted pharmaceutical drugs associated with pain management including the geographical distribution of seizures in the United States over a three year period, 2004 through 2006.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by providing crucial information on the diversion of narcotic analgesic drugs.

After attending this presentation, attendees will have an enhanced understanding of prescription drug seizures of diverted pharmaceutical drugs associated with pain management. Analysis of the data will include the geographical distribution of seizures in the United States over a three year period, 2004 through 2006. The presentation will be based on data from the National Forensic Laboratory Information System (NFLIS) which reflects drugs seized by law enforcement agencies and analyzed by forensic laboratories, focusing specifically on controlled prescription drug analgesics commonly associated with pain management.

Chronic pain affects over 50 million Americans. The non-medical use of diverted controlled substance prescription drugs commonly used in pain management is a serious and growing problem in the United States. An estimated 168,476 narcotic analgesic items were analyzed during this period. The estimated number of prescriptions dispensed per drug item reported in NFLIS for 2004 through 2006 indicates that methadone, morphine, and oxycodone had low prescription-to-seizure ratios compared to other drugs, indicating a potentially higher level of diversion. Hydrocodone (65,161 items), oxycodone (50,668 items), and methadone (15,728 items) were the most commonly reported narcotic analgesic prescription drugs in participating state and local crime laboratories from 2003 to 2006, representing 78% of narcotic analgesics. In 2006, hydrocodone was the 5th most common drug reported in NFLIS followed by oxycodone (7th), methadone (11th), morphine (16th), codeine (21st), and fentanyl (25th). Highlighted findings will include regional findings which demonstrate that in the West, the most prevalent narcotic analgesic drug item identified was hydrocodone (37%). In the Northeast, Midwest and South regions; oxycodone was identified as the most prevalent narcotic analgesic drug item at 49%, 33% and 25% item counts respectively. The number of items reported as fentanyl by NFLIS laboratories has dramatically increased in this time period (1,728 items in 2006) with the highest increases reported in the Northeast. The lowest fentanyl item count was found in the data report from laboratories in the West region. Additional data will show population adjusted regional trends and depict spatial distribution of selected analgesic drugs (e.g., hydrocodone, oxycodone, methadone, fentanyl) by using Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis.

Laboratories participating in NFLIS analyze and report on drug evidence secured in law enforcement operations, offering a unique resource for monitoring drug abuse and trafficking, including the diversion of legally manufactured drugs into illegal markets. NFLIS is an important analytical resource for drug policy and can provide timely information on the illicit trafficking of prescribed drugs across the United States.

Pharmaceutical Diversion, Prescription Drug Analysis, Drug Seizures