

# Prescription Painkillers Kill More Americans Than Heroin & Cocaine Combined

September 24, 2012 by Sherry Baker | Health Sciences Editor

According to a new report from *Brandeis University*, prescription painkillers -- opioid or narcotic pain relievers like Vicodin (hydrocodone), OxyContin (oxycodone), Opana (oxymorphone), and methadone -- are now responsible for more fatal overdoses in the U.S. than heroin and cocaine combined.

"An epidemic of prescription drug abuse is devastating American families and draining state and federal time, money and manpower," Rep. Hal Rogers (R-Ky.), chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, said in a media statement about the study. "Law enforcement and health officials are doing heroic work and, thankfully, this report provides a road map to help them further."

So police and health "officials" are the key to stopping what the *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* (CDC) has called an epidemic of prescription painkiller deaths? Maybe there is another key factor, another proverbial elephant in the room that needs to be dealt with but that few, including those who wrote this report, want to acknowledge -- specifically, the doctors who prescribe these drugs in the millions and who have increasingly prescribed them for over a decade.



Let's breakdown the new painkiller drug study's "road map."

The report's primary conclusion is that "prescription drug monitoring programs should shift from a reactive to a proactive approach." It points out that most states have programs to curb abuse and addiction but that many don't fully analyze the data they collect. And the report explains how analyzing trend data can help law enforcement agencies identify "pill mills" that illicitly distribute prescription painkillers and how getting more doctors to participate in and utilize prescription drug monitoring programs (revealing patients who "doctor shop" to get multiple prescriptions) could reduce fatal prescription painkiller overdoses.

But wait a minute. Is the so-called epidemic of prescription painkiller deaths really going to be halted primarily by more monitoring? Isn't the key for doctors to cut back on vastly over-prescribing these highly addictive and dangerous drugs in the first place?

If you think these drugs aren't handed out too readily by MDs, consider this statistic: **according the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, enough prescription painkillers were prescribed in 2010 to medicate every American adult around-the-clock for a month.** Although many of these drugs ended up being misused or abused, the CDC also notes most of these pills were legitimately prescribed for a medical purpose. But narcotic and opioid drugs are not the only way pain can be relieved. While they may be the drugs of choice in extreme circumstances, other kinds of pain relief from less toxic drugs to natural therapies -- including acupuncture, yoga, chiropractic and exercise -- can often provide relief to countless pain sufferers without the danger of addiction and death.

Bottom line: **the dramatic increase in mortality and overdoses from prescription drugs is largely due to a vastly increased use of these drugs by doctors.** In fact, between 1999 and 2010, the sales of these Big Pharma, highly addictive and potentially killer drugs increased four-fold.

And while it is a terrible and sobering fact that, according to the CDC, about 15,000 Americans die from overdosing on prescription painkillers each year, let's put this tragedy in the larger perspective of the ongoing Big Pharma drug nightmare. The truth is, overdose deaths from painkillers are not the biggest drug problem in the US. Consider that 100,000 Americans die each year from their prescriptions due to known side-effects -- not because the doctor made a mistake and prescribed the wrong drug, or the pharmacist made a mistake in filling the prescription, or the patient accidentally took too much or overdosed on purpose.

Sources: <http://www.pewhealth.org>, <http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/PainkillerOverdoses/index.html>, <http://news.yahoo.com>, <http://www.pewhealth.org>. Original article can be found at: [http://www.naturalnews.com/037299\\_prescription\\_painkillers\\_heroin\\_fatalities.html#ixzz27X25TFg9](http://www.naturalnews.com/037299_prescription_painkillers_heroin_fatalities.html#ixzz27X25TFg9)