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# Study: Friends, Relatives Biggest Source of Opiate Painkillers

February 25, 2010

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## Research Summary

A startling 97 percent of individuals who misused painkillers like Vicodin and OxyContin said that they got the drug from a friend or relative with a prescription, [HealthDay News](#) reported Feb. 18.

Researchers who surveyed 5,300 adults in Utah found that 85.2 percent of individuals who misused prescription opiate painkillers said friends or relatives gave them the drug willingly, while 9.8 percent said they took the drug from friends or relatives without their knowledge. Only 4.1 percent of those surveyed said they had bought the drug.

About three-quarters of those who got the drugs from friends or relatives said they did so to relieve pain; 15 percent said they acquired the drugs "for fun."

Study co-author Erin Johnson of the Utah Department of Health urged residents to discard their leftover medication, but acknowledged that many people are unwilling to do so because they paid for the drugs and believe they might need to use them in the future.

The study was published Feb. 19, 2010 in the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's [Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report](#).

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This article [summarizes](#) an external report or press release on research published in a scientific journal. When available, links to the sources are provided above.

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Posted by **mail** on 26 Feb 10 10:41 AM EST

These findings suggest that prescribers have a responsibility in the Oxycontin issues. Current prescribing practices allow for large numbers of pills to be dispensed. Doctors need more education in pain management, addiction, and the ethics of over-prescribing.

Posted by **Diane** on 26 Feb 10 12:49 PM EST

I think this pretty much vindicates those patients who legitimately use these meds for pain management, as well as the doctors who prescribe them and the pharmacists who

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dispense them. The true drug mills are few and far between (and are all currently known to the DEA anyway). Perhaps there is hope that we will no longer be treated as addicts and our medical providers will no longer be scrutinized as drug dealers.

*Posted by **Stewart B. Leavitt, MA, PhD** on 01 Mar 10 12:27 PM EST*

This item above and the Healthday News article from which it is derived blatantly misrepresent the evidence. OxyContin (the long-acting form of oxycodone) is not specifically even mentioned in the MMWR report. See our commentary on this at <http://bit.ly/bmiMEA>

*Posted by **News Editor @Join Together** on 01 Mar 10 01:20 PM EST*

Dr. Leavitt is correct that the HealthDay News article we summarized did a poor job of representing the study findings. We have corrected our summary to better reflect the MMWR report. Note that HealthDay News has also subsequently updated their article to shift the focus from OxyContin to prescription opiates in general.

*Posted by **Stephan** on 05 Mar 10 01:33 PM EST*

Read the MMWR report carefully. A clear majority (72.4%) of the people using the opiates without a prescription were 'using it to relieve pain'. That's hardly indicative of a recreational addict being fed pills by their friends and relatives. The more likely situation: "Honey, I tweaked my knee badly and Tylenol isn't cutting it." "Here, take 1 of my leftover Vicodin." People prescription-share all the time for sheer convenience, rather than taking paid leave, waiting in a doctor's office, dropping the scrip at the pharmacy, waiting for that... Is it really a shock that people don't want to throw away (and 'waste') the meds that they spent insurance premiums, copays, and time on? Also note that only 15.3% were using the meds "for fun", then note the combined percentage for those stealing/purchasing the meds: 13.9%. Not so shocking anymore, is it?

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