

**CONTACT:**

Dr. Sharon Harris

516-676-2008

safeglencove@yahoo.com

**Press Release**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Facts About Prescription Drug Use**

The Community Committee of the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition serves as a think tank to examine community needs assessment data, implement alcohol and substance abuse awareness campaigns, educate the public regarding ongoing and emerging alcohol and substance abuse trends and pursue viable funding streams to address gaps in community services.

According to a Community Survey of 1408 Glen Cove residents conducted by the Coalition in 2016, prescription drug use was an area of concern. This is not surprising as the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) maintains that prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs are, after marijuana (and alcohol), the most commonly abused substances by Americans 14 and older.

Some medications have psychoactive (mind-altering) properties and, because of that, are sometimes abused—that is, taken for reasons or in ways or amounts not intended by a doctor, or taken by someone other than the person for whom they are prescribed. People often think that prescription and OTC drugs are safer than illicit drugs. But they can be as addictive and dangerous and put users at risk for other adverse health effects, including overdose—especially when taken along with other drugs or alcohol. Before prescribing drugs, a health care provider considers a patient's health conditions, current and prior drug use, and other medicines to assess the risks and benefits for a patient.

The classes of prescription drugs most commonly abused are:

- Opioid pain relievers, such as Vicodin or Oxycontin
- Stimulants for treating Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), such as Adderall, Concerta, or Ritalin
- Central nervous system (CNS) depressants for relieving anxiety, such as Valium or Xanax
- The most commonly abused OTC drugs are cough and cold remedies containing dextromethorphan

Prescription and OTC drugs may be abused in one or more of the following ways:

- Taking a medication that has been prescribed for somebody else. Unaware of the dangers of sharing medications, people often unknowingly contribute to this form of abuse by sharing their unused pain relievers with their family members.
- Taking a drug in a higher quantity or in another manner than prescribed. Most prescription drugs are dispensed orally in tablets, but abusers sometimes crush the tablets and snort or inject the powder. This hastens the entry of the drug into the bloodstream and the brain and amplifies its effects.
- Taking a drug for another purpose than prescribed. All of the drug types mentioned can produce pleasurable effects at sufficient quantities, so taking them for the purpose of getting high is one of the main reasons people abuse them.

Nationally, there is a prescription opioid overdose epidemic. More than 2 million people in the United States suffer from substance use disorders related to prescription opioid pain relievers. The terrible consequences of this trend include overdose deaths, which have more than quadrupled in the past decade and a half. The causes are complex, but they include overprescription of pain medications. In 2013, 207 million prescriptions were written for prescription opioid pain medications.

NIDA researchers maintain prescription opioid abuse may be a first step to heroin use.

- Prescription opioid pain medications such as Oxycontin and Vicodin can have effects similar to heroin when taken in doses or in ways other than prescribed, and research now suggests that abuse of these drugs may actually open the door to heroin abuse.
- Nearly half of young people who inject heroin surveyed in three recent studies reported abusing prescription opioids before starting to use heroin. Some individuals reported taking up heroin because it is cheaper and easier to obtain than prescription opioids.
- Many of these young people also report that crushing prescription opioid pills to snort or inject the powder provided their initiation into these methods of drug administration.
- Most teenagers who abuse prescription drugs are given them for free by a friend or relative

NIDA research on the treatment for substance use disorders have shown that substance use disorders are brain disorders that can be treated effectively.

- Treatment must take into account the type of drug used and the needs of the individual. Successful treatment may need to incorporate several components, including detoxification, counseling, and medications, when available. Multiple courses of treatment may be needed for the patient to make a full recovery.
- The two main categories of drug addiction treatment are behavioral treatments (such as contingency management and cognitive-behavioral therapy) and medications.
- Behavioral treatments help patients stop drug use by changing unhealthy patterns of thinking and behavior; teaching strategies to manage cravings and avoid cues and

situations that could lead to relapse; or, in some cases, providing incentives for abstinence.

- Behavioral treatments, which may take the form of individual, family, or group counseling, also can help patients improve their personal relationships and their ability to function at work and in the community.

Addiction to prescription opioids can additionally be treated with medications including buprenorphine, methadone, and naltrexone, often referred to in the treatment field as "Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT)". These drugs can counter the effects of opioids on the brain or relieve withdrawal symptoms and cravings, helping the patient avoid relapse. Medications for the treatment of addiction are administered in combination with psychosocial supports or behavioral treatments in conjunction with MAT.

For more information about prescription drug use please visit the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov), the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS) at [www.oasas.ny.gov](http://www.oasas.ny.gov), or Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration(SAMHSA) at [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov).

For more information about SAFE and its other initiatives please contact the office at: 516-676-2008 or visit the website at <http://www.safeglencove.org> or our Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition>.