PHARMACY ROBBERY INVESTIGATIONS

Deputy Nick Baldrige
Santa Cruz County Sheriff’s Office
Background

- Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science from Santa Clara University
- Master’s Degree in Criminal Justice from The University of Cincinnati
- Patrol Deputy for 8 Years with SCSO
- K-9 Handler for 6 of the years
- Court recognized expert in narcotic identification, possession for sales, influence of narcotics and narcotics trafficking.
Background (cont.)

- Court expert in prescription drug recognition, identification for sales of prescription medication and street level use regarding prescription medication.
- Key note speaker for numerous organizations regarding the use, identification of addiction and preventative measures related to prescription medication.
- ROP Criminal Justice teacher at Soquel High School
Commonly Abused Prescription Medications

- Norco, Vicodin, Tylox
- Oxycontin, Oxycodone
- Methadone
- Percocet
- Percodan
- Xanax
- Subutex, Suboxone
- Fentanyl
Extent of the Problem

- Prescription drug abuse is starting as early as 12-13 years of age.
- 75% of high school juniors and seniors know how and where to obtain any opiate based prescription medication within an hour.
- Prescription drug use at the high school level is estimated at approximately 25%.
- Prescription medication is commonly used during high school aged parties.
Ways of Ingestion

- When used illicitly prescription medication is ingested by:
  - Smoking is the most common form of ingestion.
    - The pill is put on a piece of aluminum foil, a heat source is put under the pill and a straw or hollow pen is used to ingest the smoke.
  - Snorting is less common, but also used.
    - The pill is grated, typically using a hose clamp, to create a fine powder and then snorted.
Ingestion is less common, but has a higher likelihood of future heroin use.

- The pill is grated and placed in water. The water is then heated to dissolve the pill completely and draw into a syringe.

- Injection points are typically the arms, neck and legs (using a large gauge needle into the femoral artery).
Withdrawals

- Heavy users report withdrawal symptoms as soon as 6 to 12 hours after last use.

- Withdrawal Symptoms Include:
  - Perpetually Tired
  - Joints and Muscles in Constant Pain
  - Hot/Cold Sweats
  - Insomnia
  - Excessive Yawning
  - Watery Eyes
  - Depression
  - Heart Palpitations
  - Uncontrollable Coughing
  - Nausea
  - Diarrhea
  - Vomiting
  - “I thought I was dying!”
Users indicate they will do ANYTHING to get more no matter the consequences.

- Addicts are committing Residential Burglaries, Robberies, Car Jacking, Car Burglaries, Grand Thefts, Check Fraud, Prescription Fraud and Prostitution to get money for prescriptions.
Pharmacy Robberies

Preventative Measures
Lighting and Surveillance

- At night the lighting around the entire building should be on and illuminating any shadows or dark areas.
- A large number of surveillance cameras should be placed throughout the store and made visible.
Interior Deterrence

- Have a clear barrier at pharmacy counter.
- Have a single locked door as the only access point into the pharmacy area.
- Have a panic alarm button installed in 2 locations in the pill area.
  - One at the service counter and a second somewhere on the other side of the room.
What to Do if a Robbery Occurs.
Gun Challenge

- Can you identify the real firearm?

- Are you willing to bet your life on a fifty/fifty chance????????
Pros and Cons to Video

- Was there a deterrence in the pharmacy?
- Did the pharmacists act appropriately?
- Since there were more of them should they have fought back?
- Was the gun even real?
- What would YOU do in this situation?

- Would you chose to do this????????????
Are the pills on the shelves worth the chance he may have a gun?
A gunman shot four people inside a New York suburb pharmacy, killing everyone inside the store, in what police say was a robbery gone bad.

After executing the 41-year-old Pharmacist, 17-year-old assistant and two customers, the suspect filled his backpack with Hydrocodone and Vicodin then leaving the store.
Don’t Let History Repeat Itself

- Were any target hardening measures taken to prevent this robbery just over a month later?
Steps To Take If a Robbery Occurs
There is no amount of money or pills worth a person’s life.

Try to stay calm. Keep breathing and focus on what the robber is asking for.

Do not look directly at the robber, but try to pay attention to what they touch.

If you have a panic button try to get it pushed prior to the robber getting to you, but only if you can do it without being seen.
What To Do After A Robbery Occurs
Preserve the Scene

- Provide the best description possible as fast as possible to law enforcement.
- Try to get video surveillance ready for responding law Enforcement.
- Do not touch any of the areas where the robber touched.

- What evidence was left by this suspect?
Santa Cruz Walgreens Robbery

May 22, 2013
Stephen Hill, who is a 27 year old drug addict, enters the Walgreens wearing a canvas bag on his head with hole cut in it for his eyes.

He approaches the pharmacy counter and demands Xanax. He then changed his mind and wanted Klonopin.

When the employee could not find the Klonopin he then demanded methadone.
The Take

- Hill left the store having take:
  - 21 bottles of 10mg Methadone (100 count)
  - 6 bottles of 5mg Methadone (100 count)
  - 3 bottles of 2mg Alprazolam (100 count)
  - 1 bottle of 30mg Morphine (100 count)
The Getaway

- Hill fled from the store after getting the 3,000+ pills and was apprehended 0.2 miles away.
- Prior to committing the robbery he had walked up to the front door of the business wearing his mask and was called in by a Walgreens employee that was in the parking lot.
Conviction

- Hill was convicted of the robbery in Santa Cruz County.

- What could have been different to prevent the Hill Robbery?
Contact Information

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THANK YOU