Methods of Diversion and Drug Trends

Michigan Practitioner Diversion Awareness Training

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*DEA Supervisory Special Agent*

Detroit Field Division (Michigan/Ohio)
Disclosure

I do not have any relevant financial relationships with any commercial interests or any other conflicts of interests to disclose.
Drugs of Abuse
Schedules of Controlled Substances

Schedule I
- No accepted medical use/high potential for abuse/dependency (e.g., heroin, marihuana, ecstasy, “bath salts”)

Schedule II
- Accepted medical use/high potential for abuse/dependency (e.g., morphine, hydrocodone, oxycodone, cocaine, methamphetamine, methadone, meperidine, fentanyl, Adderall, and Ritalin)

Schedule III
- Accepted medical use/less potential for abuse/dependency (e.g., products containing <90 mL codeine per dosage unit, ketamine, anabolic steroids, testosterone)

Schedule IV
- Accepted medical use/less potential for abuse/dependency (e.g., benzodiazepines)

Schedule V
- Accepted medical use/less potential for abuse/dependency (e.g., codeine cough syrup)
Most commonly prescribed prescription medicine?

Hydrocodone/acetaminophen
(Norco, Vicodin, Lorcet)
# State Ranking* - Hydrocodone

## January – June 2018

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State Populations (2018)

- California 39.8M (#1)
- Texas 28.7M (#2)
- Michigan 10.0M (#10)

*Business Activity – Retail Pharmacies

*Source: ARCOS

Date Prepared: 09/07/2018
## State Ranking* - Oxycodone
### January – June 2018

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*Business Activity – Retail Pharmacies

*Source: ARCOS
Date Prepared: 09/07/2018
### State Ranking* - Oxymorphone

**January – June 2018**

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* *Source: ARCOS*

*Date Prepared: 09/07/2018*
# State Ranking* - Methadone

## January – June 2018

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* Business Activity - Retail Pharmacies

*Source: ARCOS

Date Prepared: 09/07/2018
Opioid Usage in the U.S.

Oxycodone

80 %
Opioid Usage in the U.S.

99% Hydrocodone
Prescription Opiates

Heroin
Pharmaceutical Trends: Most Abused – Michigan

- Oxycodone: $22
- Oxymorphone: $55
- Suboxone: $1500
- Hydrocodone
- Promethazine
- Alprazolam
- Tramadol
The Trinity

Other drugs that may comprise a “trinity” combination:

- Oxycodone
- Tramadol
- Gabapentin
- Others
Fentanyl

- Synthetic opioid
- Fentanyl patches
- Fentanyl citrate dispensed in a berry-flavored lollipop-type unit
- Fentanyl is 50-100 times more potent than morphine and 30-50 times more potent than heroin
- Intended to be used for chronic cancer pain & only for people who are tolerant to prescription opioid (narcotic) pain medicines
- Abused for its intense euphoric effects
Fentanyl Trends

- Lethal dose: ~2 mg for non-opioid dependent individuals
- Illicit drugs are being laced with fentanyl
- 500,000 pills can be manufactured from 1 kg of pure fentanyl
- Mexico and China: major source countries for illegal fentanyl
- Illicitly produced fentanyl is sold alone or in combination with heroin/other drugs and can mimic pharmaceutical drugs in appearance
Fentanyl Trends
Fentanyl
Fentanyl Trends
Fentanyl Trends
Fentanyl: Dangers to Practitioners

- Be cautious when inventorying personal items in ED or the hospital
- Be cautious when touching patients
- Be cautious when going through a patient’s personal items
- Don’t ever take back a patient’s medications
**Methamphetamine**

- Stimulant that speeds up body’s system
- Pill or powder form
- Available as prescription as Desoxyn® to treat obesity or ADHD
- Illegally altered form of prescription (crystal meth) resembles glass fragments

**Effects**

- Highly addictive
- Agitation, increased heart rate, blood pressure
- Increased respiration and body temperature
- Anxiety, paranoia
- High doses can cause convulsions, cardiovascular collapse, stroke, or death
Methods of Diversion
Methods of Diversion

- Employee pilferage
  - Hospitals/ambulance services
  - Practitioners’ offices
  - Nursing homes
  - Retail pharmacies
  - Manufacturing/distribution facilities
Intact Seal
Tampered Morphine
Methods of Diversion

- Pharmacy / other theft
  - Armed robbery/ night break-ins
  - In-transit loss (hijacking)
  - Smurfing (pseudoephedrine)
  - Various schemes to divert from Pharmacy
Methods of Diversion

- Practitioners / Pharmacists
  - Self abuse
  - Illegal distribution
  - Trading drugs for sex
  - Faking inventory
Tampered Midazolam Box
Don’t Forget the Bottom…
Egregious Activity
## Diversion Red Flags: Patients

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<th>Red Flag</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<td>Demands immediate attention</td>
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<td>Uninterested in exam/diagnostic tests</td>
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<td>Refusal to obtain past medical records</td>
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<td>Recites textbook symptoms</td>
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<td>Very vague medical history</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exaggerates medical condition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Claims medication, lost or stolen</td>
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Diversion Red Flags: Patients

- Claims that past hospital/clinic is out of business or burned down
- Deceives alternate practitioners while normal physician is out
- Solicits Medicaid recipients to use Medicaid cards as payment method
- Targets a lax doctor
- Takes some, sells remaining medication
- Offers to buy other patients’ pills
- Looks for employment where drugs or prescriptions are exposed
- Alters prescriptions
Potential Diversion: Practitioners*

- State laws ignored
- Cursory medical exams
- Lack of diagnostic testing/referrals
- Extremely high patient volume
- Brief visits
- Multiple drugs within the same drug category
- Cash-only practice
- Patients travel long distances

*Doing one or more of these does not make prescribing illegal. It is the totality of the circumstances. This list is not all-inclusive.
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**Potential Diversion: Practitioners**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violation of own pain management policies and guidelines</th>
<th>Warnings from insurance companies, law enforcement, other practitioners, etc.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Receiving compensation for narcotic prescriptions (sex, guns, drugs, etc)</td>
<td>Charging excessive fees for office visits and/or prescriptions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patient deaths</td>
<td>Practitioner using inventory for personal use</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patient suggests/directs medication to be prescribed</td>
<td>Patient trades services for prescriptions</td>
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</table>

*Doing one or more of these does not make prescribing illegal. It is the totality of the circumstances. This list is not all-inclusive.*
Does the Practitioner Ignore Signs of Abuse?

- Starting patients on high doses
- Patient under the influence
- Patient asks for controlled substances by name
- Patient is doctor shopping
- Warnings by patient’s family members
- Ignoring toxicology reports
- No medical history requested/obtained
- Prescribe to patients who admit to buying pills off the street
Diversion by Healthcare Providers

Carla DelVecchio
- 29-year-old Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit nurse
- Fatal fentanyl/midazolam overdose in hospital bathroom

Dr. Timothy Sutton
- 32-year-old anesthesiology resident
- Overdosed on fentanyl from doctor’s kit
- Cardiac arrest on hospital property; revived

Geneva Lively
- 33-year-old charge nurse
- Found with hydrocodone belonging to several people during DWI traffic stop
- Relinquished nursing license

Hayley Brown
- 28-year-old nurse
- Husband overdosed on stolen fentanyl
- Responding law enforcement exposed to fentanyl, hospitalized

David Estrada
- 31-year-old nurse
- Stole 25 hydromorphone syringes
- Multiple theft and fraud charges

Heidi Hostettler
- 36-year-old nurse
- Stole oxycodone from nursing home residents
- Forged signatures, shredded documents, changed Rx labels

Karen Feldner
- 56-year-old nursing director of surgery center
- Stole nearly 2,000 vials of fentanyl for personal use

Karen Feldner
- Between March 16 and May 3, 2017, 3 arrests
- Nurses aged 28, 25, and 52 arrested for theft of drugs
- Each stole various drugs for personal use

3 nurses @ same hospital
Egregious Activity: MI Physicians

**Dr. Sam Awada**
- Warren, MI
- Ran 16-month “pill mill”
- Conspired with another doctor and “marketer” to write 80,000 prescriptions for oxycodone and roxicodone
- Fraudulently billed Medicare and BCBS for services

**Dr. Fanny dela Cruz**
- Livonia, MI
- Signed blank prescription forms for controlled substances
- Medical testing, office visits billed to Medicare
- No medical examinations
- Pills prescribed by dela Cruz sold in metro Detroit

**Dr. Michael Weiss**
- Detroit, MI
- Wrote controlled substance prescription “cocktails” to patients without legitimate medical needs at a co-conspirator’s home
- Fraudulently billed Medicare and Blue Cross

**Dr. Mark Buzzard**
- W Bloomfield, MI
- Involved in $13 million prescription drug ring diverting drugs within Michigan and to Tennessee
- Wrote prescriptions for cash payments
- Wrote more than 2 million dosage units of controlled substances
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>City, State</th>
<th>Activity Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kelly Beelman</td>
<td>Bay City, MI</td>
<td>Wrote and sold bogus prescriptions for “patients” to sell, Addiction to Ambien, Wrote Ambien prescriptions; “patients” would fill prescription and sell Beelman the pills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Flores</td>
<td>San Ramon, CA</td>
<td>Promoted self as “personal medical quarterback”, Sold multiple controlled substances to undercover agents, Told undercover agent that he didn’t usually offer prescriptions to strangers unless they were “hot”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leonard Marchetta</td>
<td>Staten Island, NY</td>
<td>Ran large oxycodone distribution ring, Wrote approximately 4,109 oxycodone prescriptions over two-year period, Received $250 cash from “patients” in addition to billing Medicaid/insurance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Troyan</td>
<td>Riverhead, NY</td>
<td>Operated two urgent care clinics, Issued prescriptions for thousands of oxycodone pills for illegal re-sale, Involved in 4-year drug conspiracy with 20 others to support pill habit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Marketing Scheme

Marketer → Practitioner

Patient → Pharmacy
Marketing Scheme

- **Marketer:**
  - Brings “patients” to conspiring doctor, receives payment from doctor
    - Often by van or busload
    - Multiple patients per day
    - May solicit “patients” from soup kitchens and shelters
    - Looks for patients with “red white and blue” cards
  - Purchases prescription drugs from “patients” to sell on the street

- **“Patient”:**
  - Insurance/Medicare/Medicaid billed by doctor, pharmacy
  - Sells prescription pills to marketer
Contact Information

- **Complaints**
  - **Local Police:** Immediate threats to human health/safety
  - **Consumer complaints (LARA):** 517-373-9196; BPLhelp@michigan.gov
  - **DEA:** Report prescription drug diversion by doctor/pharmacy
    www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/tips_online.htm
  - **HHS:** Hotline 1-800-HHS-TIPS; OIG.HHS.gov/report-fraud

- **State PDMP**
  - **Michigan Automated Prescription System (MAPS) help:**
    www.michigan.gov/mimapsinfo

- **Recovery**
  - **1-800-662-HELP (4357)**
  - **https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov**