

National Institutes of Health National Institute on Drug Abuse Bethesda, Maryland 20892

March 15, 2006

TO:

The Surgeon General

Through:

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Director, NIH

FROM:

Director, National Institute on Drug Abuse

SUBJECT:

Meeting on Prescription Drug Abuse - ACTION

Action Requested by: April 15, 2006

ISSUE

To request a meeting of the Surgeon General, the Director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) regarding the emerging problem of prescription drug abuse in the United States.

DISCUSSION

The topic of prescription drug abuse is one that has been receiving increasing media attention, and rightfully so. NIDA's 2005 Monitoring the Future Survey (MTF) revealed that approximately 1 out of 10 high school students will have abused Vicodin before graduating. This statistic is alarming, especially when one considers that this drug is not the only prescription medication being abused. We have seen increases in the abuse of sedatives and OxyContin among 12th graders, as well as disturbing levels of abuse of prescription stimulant medications. In fact, a recent NIDA study found that more than 1.6 million American teens and young adults had misused a prescription stimulant during a 12-month period, and 75,000 became addicted. Moreover, diversion or illicit acquisition of psychotherapeutic medications is not a problem limited to youth, but is common in the general population as well. In 2004, an estimated 6 million people—youth and adults—reported current non-medical use of a prescription psychoactive drug, according to the latest National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH). Furthermore, other reporting systems are showing disturbing increases in drug-abuse related emergency room visits and treatment admissions tied specifically to opiate abuse.

Taken together, these factors demand that we pay more attention to the problem of prescription drug abuse. Given the startling statistics, efforts to heighten awareness of this problem should be a top public health priority. Working together, we can accomplish this goal. My staff and I, with input from NIH Director, Dr. Elias Zerhouni, have developed some specific action items that we

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believe will facilitate this process, and would welcome an opportunity to share these ideas with you.

RECOMMENDATION

Nora D. Volkow, M.D.

I recommend that we meet to discuss the various ways in which our offices can work collaboratively to address this topic of urgent public health concern.

DECISION

Meet at a location and	on a date y	et to be de	termined.
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