

Ontario Moving To Reduce Abuse Of Prescription Narcotics

Mcquinty Government Aims To Ensure Appropriate Prescribing, Dispensing And Use

NEWS

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Ontario is taking action to curb the growing abuse of prescription narcotics and controlled substances, including those containing oxycodone.

Across North America, addictions, crime and deaths related to prescription drug abuse have increased significantly in recent years. Since 1991, prescriptions for oxycodone-containing products rose by 900 per cent. The number of oxycodone-related deaths in Ontario has nearly doubled since 2004.

To combat this growing problem, the province intends to introduce legislation this fall that would, if passed, help address the abuse of prescription narcotics, while ensuring access to pain medication for those who need it most.

As part of a new Narcotics Strategy, the province would track prescriptions through a new database that would flag unusual patterns of prescribing and dispensing. In instances of inappropriate activity, responses could include educational support and resources, reporting to the appropriate regulatory college and in extreme circumstances, law enforcement. In addition, the strategy would include more education to patients about the appropriate use of prescription narcotics.

The new Narcotics Strategy would put Ontario in line with six other provinces and 33 U.S. states that have prescription drug monitoring programs in place.

QUOTES

"We know that there is a serious narcotics abuse issue facing many Ontarians and their families throughout our province. We are taking a range of steps that reflect the severity of the issue."

-- Deb Matthews, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care

"Ontario needs a system-wide program to address serious problems associated with prescription narcotics and controlled substances. Ontario's plan to educate the public and health providers, as well as implement a system to monitor prescribing and dispensing, are critical steps forward."

- Dr. Jack Mandel, President, College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario

QUICK FACTS

- Ontario has the highest rate of narcotics use in Canada.
- Narcotics abuse-related admissions to publicly funded treatment and addiction services in Ontario doubled from 2004-08.
- The ministry spent \$156 million on narcotics for Ontario Drug Benefit Program recipients in 2009-10, for 3.9 million prescriptions. This equates to an average of over six prescriptions per person, and an annual cost of \$260 per person.
- A number of First Nations communities have declared a state of emergency over the abuse of prescription narcotics, particularly oxycodone-containing drugs.
- Ontario's Narcotics Strategy has been developed with the advice of the Narcotics Advisory Panel. Established in March 2009, the 12-member group includes family physicians, pain and addictions specialists, pharmacists, coroner's office, professional regulatory bodies, and law enforcement.

LEARN MORE

[Find out more about Ontario's Narcotics Strategy.](#)

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