As If We Didn’t Have Enough on Our Plates: Marijuana & Prescription Drugs

Terry Cline, PhD
Oklahoma Commissioner of Health
ASTHO President
It falls to the public health community to raise awareness about substance abuse and, likewise, the potential consequences associated with both prescription drugs and marijuana.

Why is it so challenging?
Perceptions of Risk

Prescription drugs often perceived as “safe” because they are legally manufactured and dispensed.

The percentage of youths aged 12 to 17 perceiving great risk in smoking marijuana once or twice a week decreased between 2007-2012, from 54.6 to 43.6 percent.

Source: 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)
Making drugs legal does not necessarily make them safe for all consumers in all settings or for all conditions.

### Table 4. Drugs with Increasing Involvement in Emergency Department (ED) Visits for Drug Misuse or Abuse: 2004 to 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drug</th>
<th>ED Visits, 2004</th>
<th>ED Visits, 2010</th>
<th>Percent Change, 2004 to 2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Illicit Drugs</td>
<td>991,640</td>
<td>1,171,024</td>
<td>NC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Marijuana</strong></td>
<td>261,619</td>
<td>461,028</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDMA (Ecstasy)</td>
<td>10,227</td>
<td>21,836</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pharmaceuticals</td>
<td>626,472</td>
<td>1,345,645</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-anxiety and Insomnia Drugs</td>
<td>210,711</td>
<td>472,769</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benzodiazepines</td>
<td>170,471</td>
<td>408,021</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antipsychotics</td>
<td>41,930</td>
<td>69,149</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNS Stimulants (e.g., ADHD Drugs)</td>
<td>10,656</td>
<td>31,507</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muscle Relaxants</td>
<td>29,014</td>
<td>58,783</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pain Relievers</strong></td>
<td>282,275</td>
<td>659,969</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Narcotic Pain Relievers</strong></td>
<td>166,338</td>
<td>425,247</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hydrocodone Products</em></td>
<td>46,536</td>
<td>115,739</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Oxycodone Products</em></td>
<td>51,418</td>
<td>182,748</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Percent change is measured as difference in the estimated number of visits between 2004 and 2010. Reported changes are significant at the .05 level; “NC” signifies no significant change.

Source: 2010 SAMHSA Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN).
Determining the Public Health Impact of Legalizing Marijuana Is Complicated

“The intersection of demographic factors such as race and ethnicity with drug and alcohol use remains among the unexplained anomalies in the epidemiological literature on substance use.”

Prescription drugs as the primary driver of overdose deaths. (Top 15 drug or drug classes, US 2010)
But deaths are just the "tip of the iceberg..."

For every 1 prescription opioid overdose death in 2010 there were...

- 15 abuse treatment admissions
- 26 emergency department visits
- 115 who abuse/are dependent
- 733 nonmedical users
- $4,350,000 in healthcare-related costs

Where Controlled Prescription Drugs and Marijuana Intersect: Public Health Principles

- Prevent youth initiation and consumption
- Prevent impaired driving (“drugged driving”)
- Address excessive direct to consumer advertising
- Regulate contents/ingredients, formulation, and labeling
- Determine who may lawfully obtain these drugs and what is a reasonable quantity to possess
- Develop rules to determine where and how products may be sold, dispensed, and/or used
### TABLE 1—Linking Regulatory Approaches to Public Health Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regulatory Choices</th>
<th>Public Health Objective to Minimize</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                                     | Youths’ Access and Use | Drugged Driving | Dependence and Addiction | Unwanted Contaminants and Uncertain Potency | Concurrent Use of Marijuana and Alcohol
| Increase prices                     | X                               | X               | X                           | X                                      | ?
| Create state monopoly               | X                               | X               | X                           | X                                      | X
| Restrict and monitor licenses and licensees | X                           | X               | X                           | X                                      | X
| Limit products sold                 | X                               | X               | X                           | X                                      | X
| Limit marketing                     | X                               | X               | X                           | X                                      | X
| Restrict public consumption         | X                               | X               | X                           | X                                      | X
| Measure and prevent impaired driving | X                               |                 | X                           | X                                      | X

It is impossible to predict how concurrent use will influence social welfare under legalization, but because of the existing evidence it seems appropriate, at least initially, to minimize the concurrent use of marijuana and alcohol in public.

Comprehensive and Cross-sector Strategies

- Prevention Education
- Surveillance Monitoring (PDMPs)
- Diversion Control Law Enforcement Licensure
- Treatment Recovery
ASTHO President’s Challenge

• Focuses attention on a critical national health issue
  ✓ Public health
  ✓ Population impact

• Public health strategies can be applied

• Yields benefits and impact in a relatively short period of time
2014 President’s Challenge

Goal:
• Improve health outcomes and reduce human and economic costs associated with prescription drug misuse, abuse, and overdose.

Pledge:
• Reduce the rate of nonmedical use and the number of unintentional overdose deaths involving controlled prescription drugs* 15 percent by 2015.

*(including opioid analgesics, stimulants, tranquilizers, and sedatives)
Building a Strategic Map: The Role of Partners

Prioritize multi-sector efforts and identify collaborations, partnerships, stakeholders, and corresponding efforts to address prescription drug abuse.

- American Academy of Pain Management
- American Pharmacists Association
- American Association of Poison Control Centers
- American Society of Addiction Medicine
- PDMP Center of Excellence (Brandeis University)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Clinton Foundation
- Federation of State Medical Boards
- Kanawha-Charleston Health Department
- Maryland Poison Control Center
- National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws
- National Association of Chain Drug Stores
- National Association of County and City Health Officials
- National Association of State Alcohol and Drug Abuse Directors
- National Governors Association
- National Institute on Drug Abuse
- Office of the Army Surgeon General
- Ohio Department of Health
- Oklahoma State Department of Health
- Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs
- Personal Advocate
- Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America
- Project Lazarus
- Safe States Alliance
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- Tennessee Department of Health
- United States Department of Justice
- University of Kansas School of Medicine
- University of Rochester Medical Center
- Vermont Department of Health
- White House Office of National Drug Control Policy

Ongoing Work: Expand and Strengthen Key Partnerships & Collaborative Infrastructure
ASTHO Prescription Drug Misuse and Abuse Strategic Map: 2013 - 2015

Achieve Measurable Reductions in Controlled Prescription Drug Misuse, Abuse & Overdose Using a Comprehensive Approach

A. Expand and Strengthen Prevention Strategies
B. Improve Monitoring and Surveillance
C. Expand and Strengthen Control and Enforcement
D. Improve Access to and Use of Effective Treatment and Recovery Support

E. Expand and Strengthen Key Partnerships and Collaborative Infrastructure

F. Secure/Align Resources and Infrastructure to Implement Comprehensive Approaches

G. Use Data, Evaluation and Research to Inform Interventions and Continuous Improvement
2014 President’s Challenge

Encourages all S/THOs to apply strategies to achieve measurable reductions in controlled prescription drug misuse, abuse, and overdose

- Identify at least one policy or program to implement, improve, or evaluate in the next year

Move beyond “silo-based” approaches to focus on collaboration with partners to carry out aligned, comprehensive efforts
2014 President’s Challenge

As of 05/19/2014, 32 states and one territory have accepted the Challenge!