

**Prescription Drug Abuse and Diversion:
Results of a Survey of Physicians & Dentists**

Preventing Unintentional Prescription Drug Poisoning
Sponsor: Public Health - Dayton & Montgomery County

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To identify the training needs of prescribers for prevention and intervention efforts to address the problem of *Unintentional Prescription Drug Poisoning*, a web-based survey was created and administered in September, 2010. The survey was publicized to the Dayton area health care providers (largely physicians and dentists) via postcards, Medical and Dental Societies, and list-serves. The survey contained 17 questions and took about 5 minutes to complete. A total of 130 people completed the on-line survey. As seen from the Figure 1, the majority of respondents were physicians, and about 70% were male. More than 80% reported prescribing opioids at their practice. About 10% did not prescribe any controlled substances, and they were excluded from responding to some of the questions, as indicated below.

As seen from average ratings displayed in Figure 2, respondents did not view prescription drug abuse at their own practice (among those who prescribed controlled substances) or overdose-related mortality in Montgomery County as significant public health problems, but they felt that prescribers carry important responsibility for helping to prevent prescription drug diversion and abuse. Overall, physicians tended to view prescription drug abuse and overdose mortality as a more significant problem than dentists, and years since graduation from medical or dental school had no effect.

The majority of the respondents correctly believed that opioids were the most commonly abused/diverted prescription drugs (Figure 3). However, only about 40% correctly indicated that pharmaceutical opioids were the most significant contributors to overdose mortality in Montgomery County (Figure 4). Those with “more years since graduation” from medical or dental school were more likely to believe that heroin or cocaine were the main contributors to overdose mortality. The majority reported refraining to prescribe scheduled drugs because of suspected diversion or abuse, but less than 40% reported any referrals to substance abuse treatment services in the past 12 months. Referrals were less commonly reported by dentists than physicians (Figure 5). The majority of respondents did not believe that available treatment methods for prescription drug abuse were very effective; physicians had more negative outlook than dentists (Figure 6). Only 38% of respondents reported they have registered with OARRS (Figure 7). Registration numbers were lower among those with more years since graduation from medical or dental school. Those who believed that prescription drug abuse was a significant problem in Montgomery County and/or in their practice, were more likely to be registered to OARRS. Overall, the majority expressed interest in all suggested training programs (Figure 10). There were no significant differences between physicians and dentists, but those with “more years since graduation” from medical/dental school expressed less interest in training on pain management and prescription of scheduled drugs. Identification of prescription drug abuse/diversion received the highest number of positive responses (Figure 10).

The main limitation of the results of this pilot survey is that the sample is small and not randomly selected. Thus, survey results must be interpreted cautiously and not generalized to all prescribers in the area.

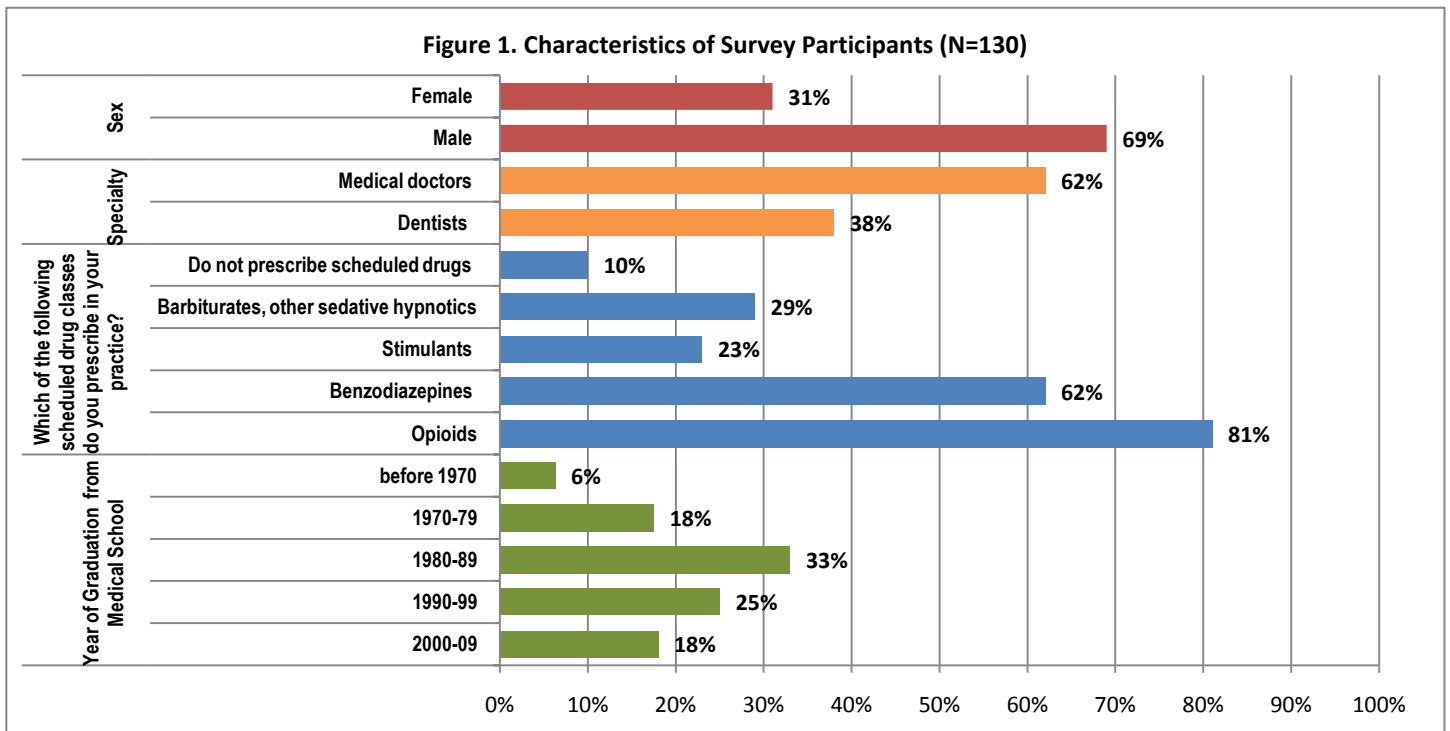
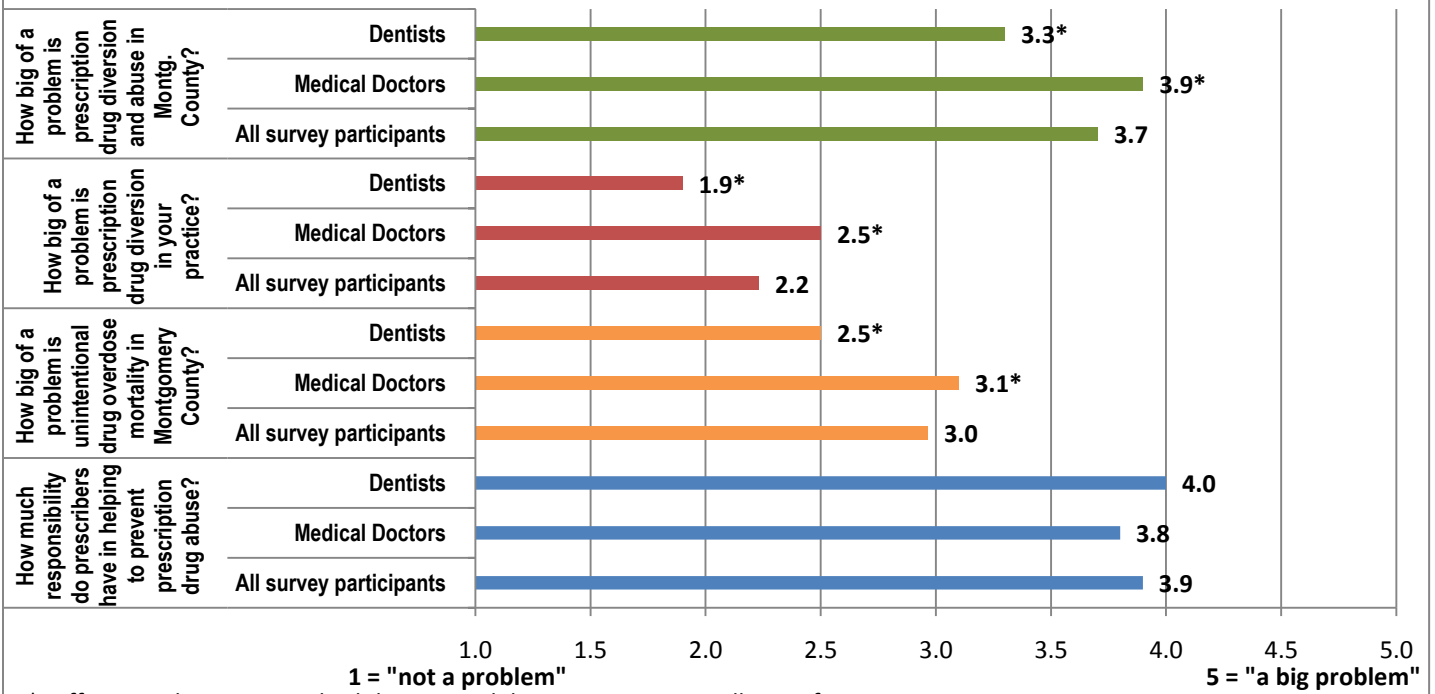


Figure 2. Views about prescription drug abuse, diversion and overdose mortality.



* Differences between medical doctors and dentists are statistically significant at $p \leq 0.01$

Figure 3. "Which of the following scheduled drug class is the most frequently diverted/abused?"

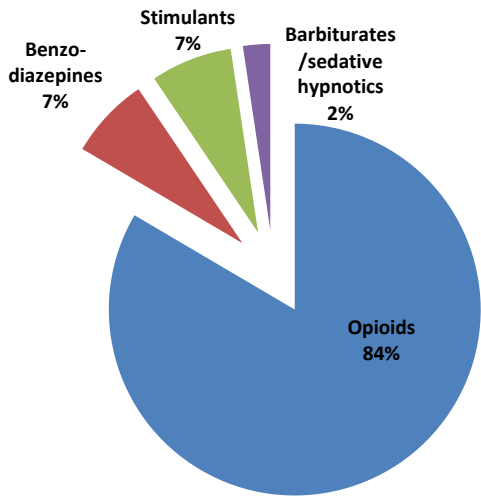


Figure 4. "Which drug is the most significant contributor to unintentional drug overdose deaths in Montgomery County?"

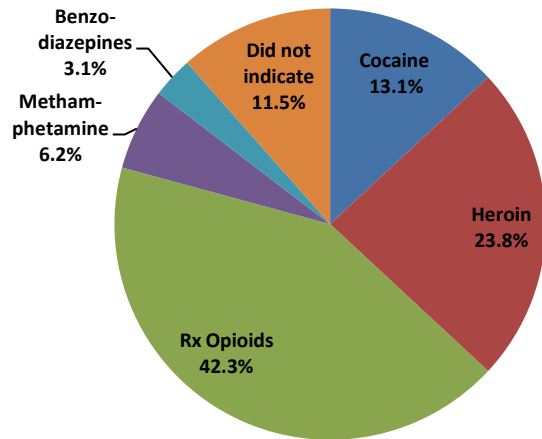


Figure 5. "In the past 12 months, have you ever: (a) refrained from prescribing scheduled drugs; (b) referred any of your patients to substance abuse treatment because of suspected prescription drug abuse problem?"
(Includes 117 respondents who reported p

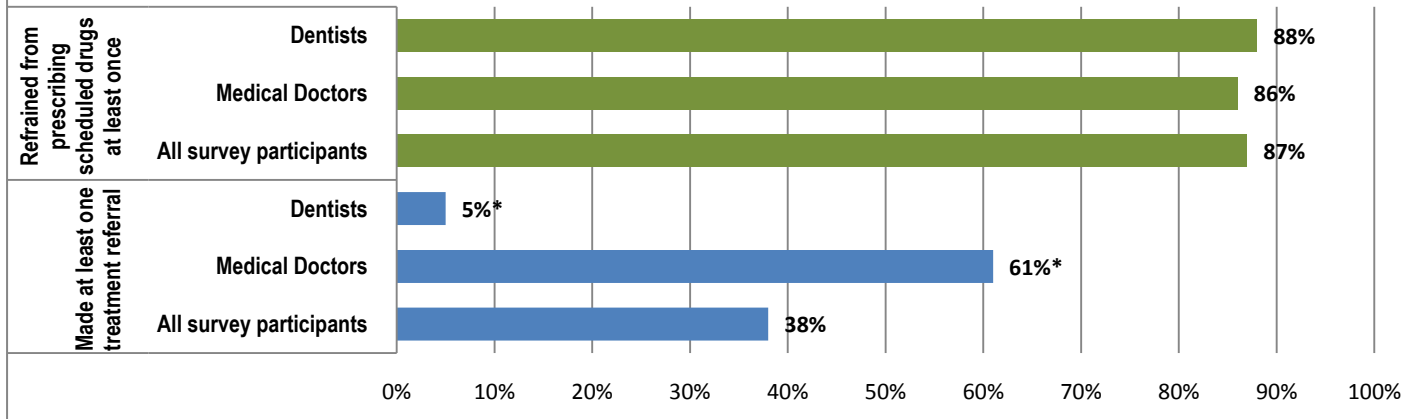


Figure 6. "In your opinion, how effective are available methods for treating prescription drug abuse?"

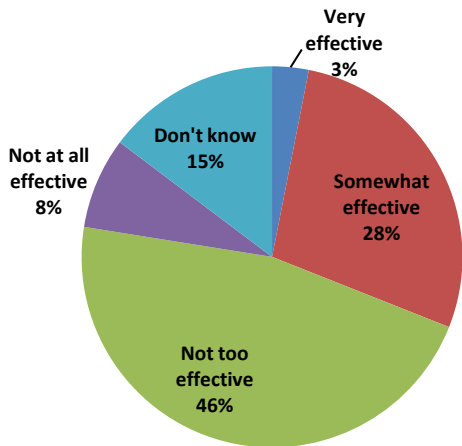


Figure 7. "Are you registered with the Ohio Automated Rx Reporting System?" (Responses by 117 who reported prescribing controlled substances in their practice)

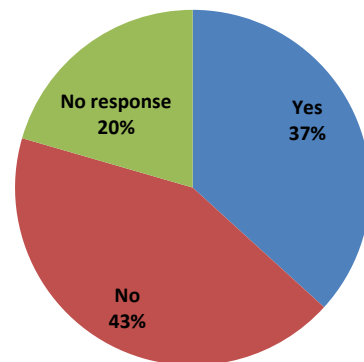


Figure 8. "When prescribing controlled drugs, how often do you check OARRS?"

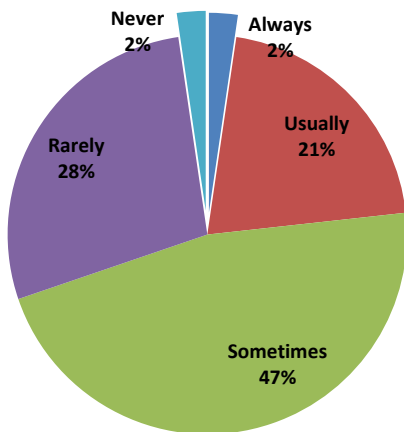


Figure 9. "How confident are you in your skills and ability to recognize when your patient is attempting to obtain controlled drugs for purposes of abuse and/or diversion?"

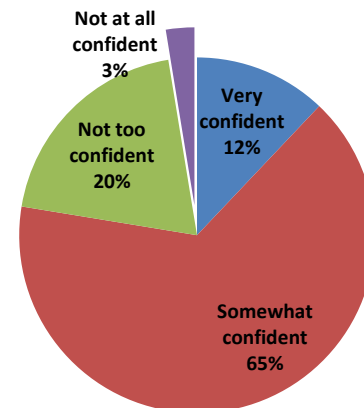


Figure 10. "Would you be interested in receiving education/training/CME in the following areas?"

