

From the Office of the Sheriff:

Since 2007, we have taken on an additional responsibility - combating prescription drug misuse. We have seen an extreme increase in "prescription drug diversion" or the unauthorized use of prescriptions by others. This problem is one of the fastest growing criminal trends in Dodge County today. In the past two years, we can contribute 19 deaths to the abuse of prescription meds. In late 2007, we put forth a very strong effort, educating over 120 professionals, from law enforcement, to local hospital staff and pharmacists. This endeavor paid huge returns to date and we are more motivated as ever to face this problem head on. These professionals understand the issue and actively review each prescription in an attempt to ID fraudulent prescriptions as well as those that doctor shop. This effort, coupled with community education will be essential for our success.

One example is the misuse of Methadone. In 1999 the country had 786 Methadone deaths and 3,000 in 2003. This is a drastic increase and Dodge County is not immune from these deaths. In the past two-years 7 of our 19 prescription drug deaths involved Methadone. Marijuana has the history of being the most often first abused drug, it is now second to prescriptions. You ask why? There are several reasons. First and foremost is the thought that a drug with a medical use is a safe drug. Though there is truth to that, it should not be assumed. Another reason is availability and ease is getting prescription medications.

Today, first time pain reliever users now out number first time marijuana users. The abuse of these same pain relievers has increased as well. Dodge County arrests for crimes involving prescription drugs has gone from 2 in 2004, increasing each year there-after to 35 arrests in 2007. Most of these cases involve the sale of both legally and illegally obtained prescription medications such as Oxycontin, Hydrocodone, Methadone, Morphine, and Percocet.

We have seen an increase in burglary's and thefts as people prey on seniors as well as those with medical conditions knowing the medicine cabinet will be supplied with ample medications. Grandchildren are stealing from grand parents, children from parents and even spouses from spouses. These drugs are being sold right along with marijuana and cocaine, adding yet another challenge to our schools. If the abuser is not stealing the medications they are committing theft to obtain money to purchase them.

What do we need you to do? Control your meds, keep them secure, keep them in their prescription bottles and well labeled. Avoid leaving them out in public view. Be suspicious of visitors that ask to use the rest room. Do not stock up on meds, have only what you need. Do not keep unused and expired medications, dispose of them properly. Last year we integrated a prescription drug turn-in with the counties Clean Sweep Program. However, Clean Sweep is a bi-annual program and we need to offer this service annually. We are working on a drop of at the upcoming Beaver Dam Share Fair at Heritage Mall.

How can you safely dispose of unwanted prescription medications? DO NOT flush them down the toilet! This contaminates the water supply. Experts advise to mix unwanted medications with coffee ground or kitty litter and place in garbage. Also, remove the labels from the bottles, pour water in them to dissolve the medications and then discard into the garbage. We need your help, thanks for listening, [tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us](mailto:tnehls@co.dodge.wi.us)