

Opioids in America: Consumer Views and Use Survey Reveals Need for Community Education to Prevent Opioid Misuse

Nearly 70 percent of Americans believe they are less likely than others to become addicted to opioids

Irvine, California, Oct. 30, 2018 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- PrescribeWellness, released the results of its “Opioids in America: Consumer Views and Use” survey. Conducted online by Propeller Insights on behalf of the company in July 2018, the survey explored more than 1,000 adult Americans’ habits surrounding opioid medications, as well as their viewpoints on the appropriate use of prescription opioids.

Nearly 53 percent of respondents have taken an opioid medication, and 14 percent are currently taking an opioid on a daily basis. Almost 70 percent of Americans believe they are less likely than others to become addicted to opioids, the top reason being that they are very careful with prescription drugs, followed by having witnessed the effects of addiction on friends and/or family members. Nearly **16 percent of Americans do not believe opioids can be addictive.**

Having seen family or friends experience opioid addiction is the main reason why the remaining 30 percent of respondents feel more likely to become addicted themselves. Compared with the nearly 34 percent of general respondents who feel this way, those across every generation, income and educational background give family or friends as their main reason for feeling more likely to become addicted, especially the following:

1. Over 42 percent of Gen X respondents (35-54 years old)
2. Over 30 percent of those with a college degree or higher, and 35 percent of those with some college or less
3. More than half, 60 percent, of those with less than high school level education
4. Nearly 40 percent of those with an annual income of less than \$50K, compared to 31 percent of those with an income of \$100K or more

When it comes to knowledge of prescription opioid medications, 41 percent of Americans did not correctly identify codeine as an opioid, and 33 percent did not identify Vicodin as an opioid medication.

Perspectives on opioid safety and treatments

The majority of respondents, 53 percent, believe opioid medications are somewhat safe, while 37 percent believe they are not safe at all, followed by nearly 10 percent who believe them to be very safe. In addition, over half of respondents would only feel comfortable taking an opioid for a week or less, and a quarter of respondents would take an opioid "as long as needed," even if that meant taking the prescription a year or more.

Forty-eight percent of Americans would be willing to take opioid medications to treat minor conditions, including:

- Headaches - 21.7 percent
- Depression - 20.4 percent
- Anxiety - 18.8 percent
- Stress - 18.2 percent
- Period cramps - 10.7 percent
- Hangover - 6.3 percent
- Boredom - 5.7 percent - editors note - really, boredom???

Daily and recreational use

Generally, 14 percent of respondents are currently taking an opioid on a daily basis and can be broken down in the following ways:

1. Over a quarter, 28 percent, of respondents with an annual income of \$100,000 or more
2. Nineteen percent of those with a Bachelor's or Advanced degree
3. Almost 17 percent of Millennials and nearly 19 percent of Gen X respondents

In addition, over 14 percent of respondents have taken an opioid recreationally - those within the Millennial and Gen X groups contributed 13 percent to this figure, and respondents with an income of \$99,999 or less contributed over 9 percent.

Level of education does not seem to be a major factor in whether or not Americans are more or less willing to take opioids for minor conditions or recreationally. In fact, 67 percent of those with a Bachelor's or Advanced degree believe opioid medications are safe, compared to 59 percent of those with some college or less. Additionally, 17 percent of those with a Bachelor's or Advanced degree have taken an opioid recreationally, compared to 13 percent of those with some college or less.

"The opioid epidemic is such a multifaceted problem, and one of the best ways we can impact our communities today as pharmacists is education, not only about life-saving, harm reduction strategies such as Naloxone training, but also through the provision of educational materials and resources from organizations, both private and public, who are involved in fighting this epidemic. I believe pharmacists are uniquely positioned in communities across this country to facilitate the spread of this knowledge," said John Power, Owner and Head Pharmacist at Power's Pharmacy.

"Our outreach can assist in eliminating the stigma associated with this disease of Opioid Use Disorder, as well as the fear many families have in dealing with this crisis in their own lives. This survey confirms that Americans across the spectrum have too vague an understanding of prescription opioids, their associated risks and the likelihood for misuse and abuse. We have the unique opportunity to engage our communities and direct them down positive, healthy pathways," Power added.