



Missoula Police Department Position Statement January 2011

House Bill 83 *Creation of a Prescription Drug Registry for the State of Montana*

The Missoula Police Department believes prescription drug abuse in Montana is a growing problem that requires immediate attention in an effort to treat those who are battling addiction now, and prevent others from becoming addicted in the future. The Missoula Police Department urges state lawmakers to enact legislation to create a prescription drug registry for Montana.

A prescription drug registry, also known as a prescription monitoring program or PMP, collects and analyzes data related to controlled substances. This includes drugs dispensed from pharmacies within the state of Montana, as well as prescriptions filled by mail-order pharmacies for patients in this state.

The registry helps monitor which prescriptions are filled and for which patient, what drug is prescribed and how much. It also collects information on who prescribed the drug, which pharmacy filled the prescription and how it was paid for. The information is contained in one central database which is controlled by an authorized state agency. For Montana, this would be the State Board of Pharmacy.

The registry will help Montana better assess the use of prescription drugs in the state. It would help confirm a patient's treatment plan is being used appropriately and help detect situations where a patient is getting medication from multiple physicians or more than one pharmacy. The prescription monitoring program would *not* prevent a patient from getting the medication necessary for their treatment; rather it is a tool for deterring abuse of these drugs and the diversion of them into the wrong hands.

States with a PMP do not use the program to target individuals for prosecution based on the information gathered. Rather, data gathered on the whole can be used to identify trends that could point to problems with drug diversion, where the medicine ends up being used by someone other than the intended patient. Any individual's information can only be reviewed after an official complaint has been filed, and only by authorized persons. In the case of a criminal complaint, law enforcement officials can only access individual information through an investigative subpoena.

Montana is ranked third in the nation for teens using prescription drugs.
Montana is seeing a dramatic increase in prescription drug related cases: up 35% in 5 years.
Missoula already suffered 17 prescription drug overdose deaths in the first 9 months of 2009.

Montana is one of 7 states that do not currently have a prescription drug monitoring program. According to the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Diversion Control, 43 states have prescription drug registries. Only Wisconsin and the District of Columbia have made no efforts at legislation related to a prescription drug registry.

It is the opinion of the Missoula Police Department that a prescription drug monitoring program is a vital tool for combating this growing drug problem within our community and the state of Montana. This registry will help physicians establish the best possible treatment plan for their patients, it will help police in their efforts to deter abuse and it will help the state better assess certain aspects of prescription drug abuse in Montana.

States with PMP's have shown lower rates of abuse and diversion of Oxy-contin when compared to states without a PMP. One state in particular, Kentucky, conducted a study to take a look at its PMP's impact. Nearly 94% of those involved with the program said the database is a very effective tool in keeping track of a patient's prescription history. More than 90% stated it is an effective and efficient tool to use. And among investigators, 96% said it is an effective tool in the investigative process.

Prescription drug use in Montana is on the rise, deaths resulting from abuse of these drugs are increasing and teenagers are using these all too accessible drugs more than ever before. Instituting this registry will help physicians and pharmacists ensure these drugs are being appropriately used by patients who need them, while assisting law enforcement in investigating where there is concern they are being abused, and hopefully to break the chain of future addiction.

Let's close with an interesting true to life story:

Last summer a physician friend from Boise was explaining to me that he was so glad to have a prescription registry in Idaho. His owns an emergency clinic in that city. Imagine my surprise when he shared with me that before the registry he felt he needed to replace his EKG instruments with a polygraph to confirm his suspicions of prescription fraud.

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