



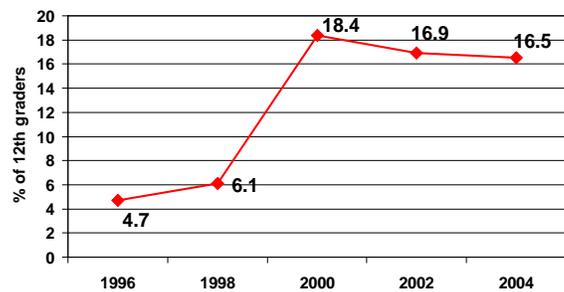
DATE: January 2005  
DATELINE: Montgomery County, Ohio

Wright State University  
The University of Akron

**High Levels of Pharmaceutical Opioid Abuse Continue Among High School and College Age Youth**

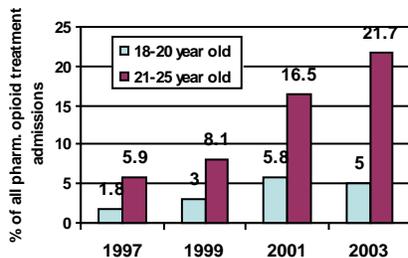
High levels of pharmaceutical opioid abuse, first documented by OSAM in 2000, continue **across the state**. According to drug users and treatment providers, Vicodin® (hydrocodone & acetaminophen), Percocet® (oxycodone & acetaminophen), OxyContin® (oxycodone controlled-release) and methadone tablets are among the most frequently abused pharmaceutical opioids. Suburban high school and college-age youth (16-25 year-olds) were consistently identified as the fastest growing groups of new users. A 20-year-old white woman from the **Dayton** area who was recovering from heroin dependence described the following pattern of drug use as common among her peers, *“I was getting ready to go to college, and I was wanting to like party and stuff all the time, and instead of drinking, ‘cause I hated to have hangovers, I just substituted OxyContin® for drinking.”*

**Table 1. Changes in lifetime prevalence of opioid abuse among Dayton area 12th graders (Dayton Area Drug Survey)**



\*until 1998, opioid category included both pharmaceutical opioids and heroin; from 2000, opioid category included only pharmaceutical opioids.

**Table 2. Changes in pharmaceutical opioid treatment admissions among 18-25-year-olds (Ohio Treatment Episode Data Set)**



The OSAM Network reports are corroborated by the Dayton Area Drug Survey which shows dramatic increases in lifetime prevalence of pharmaceutical opioid abuse among 12<sup>th</sup> graders since 1996 (Table 1).

Ohio Treatment Episode Data Set (Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) indicates a similar trend. In 1997, only about 5.9% of all opioid-related admissions in Ohio were individuals between 21 and 25 years of age; in 2001, the number more than tripled (Table 2).

Pharmaceutical opioid abuse among suburban high school and college age youth is a very troubling trend. Aside from the high potential for abuse and dependence presented by the opioids themselves, the concomitant abuse of alcohol and/or other drugs like the benzodiazepines increases the chances of health and life-threatening events due to the additive effects produced when such drugs are mixed together. OSAM Network interviews suggest that oftentimes young opioid abusers have little knowledge about the dangers associated with the drugs they are taking. Furthermore, pharmaceutical opioid abuse has been identified as a potential pathway to heroin abuse (\*Siegal, et al, 2003).

\*Siegal, H.A, Carlson, R.G., Kenne, D.R., & Swora, M.G. (2003). Probable relationship between opioid abuse and heroin use (Letter to the editor). *American Family Physician*, 67, 942.

OSAM-O-GRAMS report key findings of the Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring (OSAM) Network. Informants located throughout the state use qualitative and quantitative data to provide semiannual monitoring of substance abuse trends. The OSAM Network is funded by the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services by contract to Wright State University and by subcontract to the University of Akron. This OSAM-O-GRAM is based on the January 2005 OSAM Network meeting.

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