How the Prescription Drug Crisis is Impacting American Employers

Deborah A.P. Hersman
President & CEO
National Safety Council
Who is NSC?

The National Safety Council saves lives by preventing injuries and deaths at work, in homes and communities, and on the roads through leadership, research, education and advocacy.
Deborah A.P. Hersman
President & CEO
The Issue

Unintentional poisoning deaths, United States, 1996-2014

- All drugs, medicaments, biologicals (X40-X44)
- Prescription drugs (T36-T39, T40.2-T40.4, T41-T43.5, and T43.8-T50.8)
- Other substances (X45-49)

Note: Classification system changed in 1999 (see the Technical Appendix).

Why Employers Should Care

Bottom Line:
Employer supported and monitored treatment yields better sustained recovery rates than treatment initiated at the request of friends and family members.*

Survey Background and Methodology

- NSC commissioned B2B International to research **U.S. employers’ perceptions of and experiences with prescription drugs, and processes and policies for dealing with it.**
- **501 interviews with HR decision makers** across a geographically representative sample of US employers with 50 or more employees.
- **4.4% margin of error at the industry standard 95% confidence level.**
- Based on a **geographically representative sample** of US businesses, with a mix of industries and company sizes.
- All represent organizations with **50 or more employees**, and all are based in the US. While 23% of the businesses are global, all responses are focused on US operations.

*Full methodology can be provided*
Key Takeaways

- More than 70% of employers have been impacted by prescription drugs.
- 19% feel extremely prepared to deal with prescription drug misuse.
- 76% are not offering training on how to identify signs of misuse.
- 81% lack a comprehensive drug-free workplace policy.
- 41% of those who drug test all employees are not testing for synthetic opioids.
- Encouragingly, 70% would like to help employees return to work following appropriate treatment.
7 in 10 Employers Have Felt Some Effect Of Prescription Drug Usage

Incidents Experienced Due To Prescription Drug Usage …

- Absenteeism or missed work: 39%
- Employee use of prescription pain relievers at work: 39%
- Positive drug test: 32%
- Impaired or decreased job performance: 29%
- Family member of employee affected: 29%
- Complaints to HR / Negative impact on employee morale: 22%
- Near miss or injury: 15%
- Borrowing or selling prescription drugs at work: 14%
- Arrest (on/off job): 10%
- Overdose: 10%
- None of the above: 29%

Base: 501 (All Respondents)

Q7. Keeping in mind that all information will be kept strictly confidential, which of the following are you aware of having occurred in your workforce?
71% Say Prescription Drug Misuse is a Disease That Requires Treatment, but 65% Feel it is a Justifiable Reason to Fire an Employee.

Misuse and abuse of prescription drugs is...

- **Total Agree**: 80%
  - Strongly Disagree: 3%
  - Somewhat Disagree: 6%
  - Neither Agree Nor Disagree: 10%
  - Somewhat Agree: 46%
  - Strongly Agree: 34%
- **71%**: a disease that should be treated like any chronic health condition
- **65%**: a justifiable reason to fire an employee
- **43%**: a signal that an employee cannot be trusted
- **42%**: a moral / ethical failure

Q6. Please rate your agreement with each of the following statements about the impact of prescription drugs on your organization…

Base: 501 (All Respondents)
Only 19% Feel ‘Extremely Prepared’ to Deal with the Issue

Q19. Taking everything into account, how well prepared do you think your organization is when it comes to dealing with handling misuse or abuse of prescription medication?

© 2017 National Safety Council

making our world safer
Q11. *Which of the following topics are specifically covered in your organization’s written policies?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Covered</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Not Covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drug testing</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee <em>use of drugs without a prescription/illicit drugs</em></td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to work policies for employees undergoing substance abuse treatment</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee <em>use of prescription drugs at work</em></td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return to work policies for employees taking impairing medications</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive process to make accommodations for employee impairment due to prescription medications</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance improvement plan for employees who fail drug tests/performance declines from drug usage</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee <em>responsibility to notify supervisors of prescription drug usage</em></td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee <em>use of medical marijuana</em></td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 501  
(All Respondents)
Confidence in Policies and Procedures is Low

Q9. How confident do you feel about your organization when it comes to the following aspects of handling misuse or abuse of prescription drugs?

- Have in place **appropriate policies** for this issue
  - 3% Don’t Know
  - 10% Not At All Confident
  - 38% Not Very Confident
  - 46% Somewhat Confident
  - 17% Very Confident

- **Insurance and benefits** appropriately structured to deal with this issue
  - 4% Don’t Know
  - 15% Not At All Confident
  - 38% Not Very Confident
  - 39% Somewhat Confident
  - 15% Very Confident

- Have in place **appropriate processes** for helping workers with recovery after treatment
  - 5% Don’t Know
  - 18% Not At All Confident
  - 35% Not Very Confident
  - 38% Somewhat Confident
  - 12% Very Confident

- Quality of **procedures for supervisors or managers to follow** once they have identified workers who are potentially impaired or addicted
  - 4% Don’t Know
  - 17% Not At All Confident
  - 44% Not Very Confident
  - 33% Somewhat Confident
  - 11% Very Confident

Base: 501
(All Respondents)

© 2017 National Safety Council
Only 13% are ‘Very Confident’ Employees can Identify Abuse; 76% do not Provide Necessary Training

Q8. How confident are you that the following functions within your organization can correctly identify behavior that is a warning sign of misuse or abuse of prescription drugs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Don't Know</th>
<th>Not At All Confident</th>
<th>Not Very Confident</th>
<th>Somewhat Confident</th>
<th>Very Confident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HR Decision Makers (Me personally)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HR Department</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors / Managers</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Employees</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24% Employers offer workplace training about prescription drugs

Q12. Which of the following are true of your organization?

Base: 501 (All Respondents)
Only 57% Drug Test All Employees, and 41% Fail to Screen for Synthetic Opioids

Q12. Which of the following are true of your organization?

5 Panel Drug Test

- Cannabinoids (Marijuana, THC) 78%
- Cocaine 77%
- Opiates (Codeine, Morphine, Heroin) 76%
- Amphetamines (including Methamphetamine) (Adderall, Ritalin, etc.) 67%
- Barbiturates (Seconal, phenobarbital, etc.) 59%
- Synthetic Opioids (Oxycodone, Hydrocodone, Dilaudid, Fentanyl, etc.) 59%
- Phencyclidine (PCP) 57%
- Methaqualone (Quaaludes) 47%
- Benzodiazepines (Xanax, Ativan, Klonopin, Valium, etc.) 47%
- Methadone 44%
- Propoxyphene 31%
- Not Sure 16%

Q18. Which substances are tested for?

Base: 501 (All Respondents)
Base: 286 (Performs Drug Testing)
88% are Interested in Insurance Coverage for Alternative Pain Treatments

Insurer changing treatment or coverage options in order to promote safe and effective pain management and/or reduce misuse or abuse of prescription drugs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interest</th>
<th>Likelihood To Request</th>
<th>Expected Insurer Responsiveness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Very</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not At All</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>Responsive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q22. Assuming you were given evidence that the following would be more effective in treating pain than prescription drugs, how interested would be in having your plan cover these alternative treatment options at cost similar to prescription copays?
Q24. How likely are you to request that … [as above]
Q25. How responsive do you expect your insurer would be … [as above]

Base: 501
(All Respondents)
### Prescription Drugs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Return them to their position</strong> after appropriate treatment</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ensure they have careful monitoring</strong> for the rest of their employment with my firm</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dismiss them</strong></td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ignore</strong> the problem</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relocate them</strong> to positions of lesser responsibility</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong> (most mentions: ‘drug test’, ‘EAP’, ‘unsure’)</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Base: 501 (AllRespondents)**

Q10. Which of the following, would you say best reflects your organization’s approach to an employee who is found to be misusing or abusing …?
What Employers Can Do

- Recognize prescription drugs have a big impact on your workplace
- Put strong policies in place
- Expand drug testing panels to include opioids
- Train supervisors and employees how to spot signs of misuse
- Treat substance use problems as a disease
- Leverage Employee Assistance Programs to help employees return to work

- Employer Prescription Drug Kit
- Report: *The Proactive Role Employers Can Take*
- Report: *A Fatal Cure for Injured Workers*
- Report: *Prescription Nation*
- Report: *Evidence for the Efficacy of Pain Medications*
- Report: *The Psychological and Physical Side Effects of Pain Medications*
Contact:
NSC Public Relations Team
(630) 775-2307
media@nsc.org