Reducing Scheduled Drug Diversion & Abuse in Florida

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Abstract

Pill shoppers go from doctor to doctor to obtain scheduled drugs such as tranquilizers, stimulants and pain killers. In 2006, six people died every day in Florida due to prescription drug abuse. Increased crime and drug dependency destroy lives and inflate healthcare costs. In the absence of an electronic monitoring system, Florida has been dealing with the issue in a piecemeal fashion with no central oversight. An important issue for Florida policymakers is how to control diversion of prescription drugs while maintaining their availability for legitimate use.

Senate Bill 0462 was reintroduced in 2009 to establish an electronic prescription drug monitoring system (PDMP) for scheduled prescriptions. PDMP would ensure integrity in healthcare prescribers and pharmacies, and would help avoid potential duplications and drug interactions. The bill would also enable law enforcement agencies to collect and analyze data as well as to regulate pain clinics.

Experts worry about the chilling effect of federal regulations on physicians’ ability to treat pain. These fears are ungrounded. Only 0.075% of all physicians registered in the United States were investigated, and in only thirty four cases were physicians’ DEA registrations revoked. According to a Government Accountability Office report, no drug monitoring program restricts a physician from writing prescriptions for scheduled drugs.

Senate Bill 0462 passed but funding remains an issue. Funding can be obtained partially from DEA fees doctors pay for their licensure renewal (as in Michigan) and from fees paid for pain clinic registrations and inspections. The pilot project that AHCA had established –EmpoweRx-can be expanded to include scheduled prescriptions and include other insurers.