RADARS® SYSTEM

Title:	Internet-based diversion of prescription opioids
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Abstract:

Introduction: Escalating prescription drug abuse, along with the proliferation of Internet pharmacies, have contributed to the widely held belief that the Internet is a significant source of diverted medications. We recently achieved large samples of diversion data from NIH-funded studies of club drug users, methadone maintenance (MM) clients, substance abuse treatment clients, and street drug users. These data are combined with national surveillance systems data to examine the prevalence of Internet-based opioid diversion.

Methods: We examined sources of diversion across nine datasets [four NIH-funded studies; three national surveys from the RADARS® System; and two national databases, NSDUH and MTF]. Data were collected between 2005 and 2010. NIH study participants were recruited through targeted and respondent-driven sampling strategies; RADARS System participants were recruited from new admissions to nationwide networks of substance abuse treatment and MM programs, and from a national registry of college students; procedures were approved by the responsible institution's IRB. For participants endorsing prescription opioid misuse, we compared the prevalence of Internet opioid purchases across systems.

Results: Internet-based prescription opioid acquisition was reported by: 1.7% of Miami treatment clients; 0.8% of Miami street drug users; 0.2% of Miami club drug users; 0% of Miami MM clients; 3% of RADARS System treatment clients; 2% of RADARS System MM clients; 1.7% of RADARS System college students; 1.8% of MTF students; and 0.5% of NSDUH respondents.

Conclusions: The uniformly low rates of acquisition from online sources in all systems suggest that the Internet is a minor source of diverted prescription opioids.