

Doctors Who Self-Medicate Want Relief from Physical or Emotional Pain



Doctors who self-medicate with prescription drugs often do so to relieve physical or emotional pain, or to relieve stress, according to a survey of doctors in recovery.

The survey included 55 doctors who were being monitored for substance abuse as part of their state's physician health program, Science Daily reports. The University of Florida researchers report in the *Journal of Addiction Medicine* that 69 percent of the doctors had abused prescription drugs in addition to alcohol and illicit drugs.

Many of the doctors began abusing prescription drugs while using medications prescribed for chronic pain after surgery or trauma, the article notes. Some doctors used the drugs to gain relief from anxiety or depression, while others used them to relieve stress related to their professional or personal life.

Some doctors said they also used drugs recreationally, while others said they used prescription medications to treatment symptoms of drug withdrawal.

Prevention efforts that target prescription drug misuse by doctors should begin during medical training, and continuing education should be required throughout their careers, the researchers recommend. They wrote, "All physicians should learn the signs of substance abuse and the procedure for intervening with a colleague suspected of substance-related impairment."