NCADD
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE, INC.

Many People Who Often Abuse Painkillers Get Them from Doctors, Dealers

Wednesday, 05 March 2014 17:17

People who frequently abuse opioid painkillers are more likely to get the drugs from a doctor's prescription or a dealer, rather than for free from family or friends, a new study finds.

Almost one-third of people who use opioids between 200 and 365 days a year obtained the drugs from a doctor's prescription, compared with about one-fifth of those who use opioids less than 30 days per year, Reuters reports. Frequent opioid users were more than three times as likely as less frequent users to buy the drugs from dealers, the study found.

"This is the group where we really need to be targeting our efforts because they're most at risk for overdose or dependence," said lead author Christopher Jones, who was with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) when the study was conducted.

About 62 percent of less frequent opioid users got the drugs from people they knew, compared with 26 percent of frequent users. The researchers used data from a government survey on drug use, and found more than 12 million people age 12 and older used prescription opioids at least once a year to get high.

The findings are published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

"Many abusers of opioid pain relievers are going directly to doctors for their drugs," CDC Director Tom Frieden, MD, MPH, said in a news release. "Health care providers need to screen for abuse risk and prescribe judiciously by checking past records in state prescription drug monitoring programs. It's time we stop the source and treat the troubled."