

Number of Deadly Drug Overdoses Rises for 11th Year



The number of deadly drug overdoses in the United States increased for the 11th consecutive year, according to new government data.

More than 22,000 people died of overdoses involving prescription drugs in 2010, the Los Angeles Times reports.

In total, 38,329 people died of drug overdoses that year. Of the 57 percent whose deaths involved prescription drugs, three-quarters were due to painkillers such as OxyContin and Percocet, according to the National Center for Health Statistics.

They reported their findings this week in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

More than 74 percent of deaths due to prescription drugs were accidental, while 17 percent were suicides, the article notes. Opioids were found in 77 percent of overdoses involving benzodiazepines such as Valium, Xanax or Ativan. They were also involved in 65 percent of overdoses with antiepileptic or anti-Parkinsonian drugs, 47 percent of overdoses involving antidepressants, and 56 percent of overdoses with fever-reducing and anti-inflammatory medications.