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NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE, INC.

Emergency Department Visits Involving Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder Stimulant Medications

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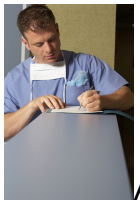 According to a recent Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN), the number of ED visits involving ADHD stimulant medications increased between 2005 and 2010 from 13,379 to 31,244 visits.

The number of ED visits involving ADHD stimulant medications increased among both males and females: visits among females increased between 2005 and 2010 from 4,315 to 14,068 visits, and visits among males nearly doubled from 9,059 to 17,174 visits.

Attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a neurobehavioral disorder marked by excessive hyperactivity, impulsivity, or inattention. Although these disorders are typically diagnosed in childhood, symptoms may persist into adulthood. About two thirds (66 percent) of children aged 4 to 17 diagnosed with ADHD took medication for the disorder in 2007, and stimulant medications remain the first-line treatment for these disorders in both children and adults.

When used as directed, ADHD stimulant medications can be effective treatment, but they can also have negative side effects, such as nervousness, insomnia, dizziness, and cardiovascular or psychiatric problems. ADHD stimulant medications can also be misused to suppress appetite, enhance alertness, or cause feelings of euphoria. Past year nonmedical use of Adderall®, a common ADHD stimulant medication, increased among adults from 2006 to 2010, particularly among young adults aged 18 to 25. Whether ADHD stimulant medications are misused or adverse reactions occur when the medication is taken as prescribed, monitoring dangerous health effects that require immediate medical attention can help guide intervention efforts.

The Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) is a public health surveillance system that monitors drug-related emergency department (ED) visits in the United States and can be used to track ED visits related to ADHD stimulant medications.

Taking prescription drugs not prescribed for you by a doctor or in a way that hasn't been recommended by a doctor, can be more dangerous than you think. In fact, it can be fatal. Click here to read more.