Illegal Street Sales of Take-Home Doses of Methadone on the Rise

Illegal street sales of take-home doses of liquid methadone, prescribed to treat opioid addiction, are on the rise, according to law enforcement officials in Indiana, Kentucky, Virginia and West Virginia.

The diverted methadone has been tracked to clinics operated by CRC Health Corp., the article notes. CRC, owned by Bain Capital Partners, is the largest U.S. provider of methadone treatment, according to Bloomberg. Last year it operated 57 clinics in 15 states, Bloomberg reports.

Former employees say the company's clinics are chronically understaffed, which makes it easier for take-home methadone to be abused. Former counselors say their heavy workload did not allow them to adequately counsel patients.

The clinics provide take-home packages, some with just one dose, and others containing as many as 30 doses. Police and prosecutors say in the small towns where the company has clinics, methadone has surfaced in criminal cases.

CRC Chief Executive Officer R. Andrew Eckert said take-home dosing can help keep patients on methadone, and off illegal drugs, by not making them come to the clinic every day for treatment. "Our mission is to help these individuals, but sadly, we cannot report 100 percent success," he said. "No treatment provider can."

Philip Herschman, Chief Clinical Officer of CRC, told Bloomberg the company follows specific and rigid state and federal rules when it decides which patients may obtain take-home doses. The company conducts spot-checks, in which it calls back patients to clinics, to account for their take-home bottles, he said. If a patient tests positive for any illicit substances, take-home doses are suspended immediately, he added.

State regulatory records show this is not always true. The records also indicate CRC's clinics have

not met staffing standards on more than 50 occasions.

Besides alcohol, our number one drug, some of the most commonly abused drugs include: marijuana, amphetamines, methamphetamine, barbiturates, cocaine, methaqualone, opium alkaloids, synthetic opioids, benzodiazepines, including flunitrazepam (Rohypnol), gamma-hydroxybutyrate (GHB), phencyclidine, methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA, ecstasy), ketamine, anabolic steroids and a host of legal prescription drugs.

Regrettably, for millions of individuals and family members, drugs have become a source of devastating pain and loss. Many drugs are addictive and the state of addiction to drugs is known as drug dependence. Click here to gain a better Understanding of Drugs and Drug Dependence.