



CVS has announced it has revoked dispensing privileges for more than 36 physicians and other healthcare providers who wrote large numbers of prescriptions for painkillers, NBC News reports.

The company described its program to evaluate prescription data in The New England Journal of Medicine. The analysis included prescriptions for hydrocodone, oxycodone, alprazolam, methadone and carisoprodol from March 2010 through January 2012.

Almost one million providers are included in the company's prescriber database. Prescribing rates were compared with other providers in the same specialty and region. The company took into account patients' ages and the number who paid for the drugs with cash.

The analysis revealed one prescriber wrote more than 44,000 doses of high-risk drugs, compared with 662 prescriptions for similar providers, the article notes. The company asked 42 providers for more information about the high number of painkiller prescriptions they wrote. Six gave reasons the company considered legitimate, such as being the medical director of a hospice.

In addition to the 36 providers whose prescribing privileges were initially revoked, several more have been suspended as the company continues its investigation.

"This isn't a definitive solution to the problem," said CVS Chief Medical Officer Troyen Brennan. "We wanted to share what it was that we did and have other people in healthcare, including other pharmacies, look at what we did and discuss what some more comprehensive solutions might be."

In September 2012, the Drug Enforcement Administration revoked the licenses to dispense controlled substances for two CVS pharmacies in Florida, after accusing them of dispensing excessive amounts of oxycodone.