

“Think About it!”

The Medical Association of Georgia (MAG), the statewide organization for physicians, is actively involved in a campaign by its foundation called “Think about it - and help stop Rx Drug Abuse!” This is a problem in our society that has grown out of proportion and causes many problems for patients, families, the medical community, and our Nation. The main culprits of abuse are pain medicines like Lortab, Percocet, Oxycodone, and anti-anxiety medicines like Xanax and Ativan. These medicines are all controlled substances, and their “use” is sometimes needed to help control severe pain or anxiety. However, the line of “abuse” is easily crossed, and this can cause problems for us all.

The CDC in Atlanta stated in 2010 there were more than 22,000 drug overdose deaths in the US that involved prescription drugs - “legal” drugs that were abused or misused. That is more people than live in Rabun County, by several thousand. I would also imagine that the number now is even higher. Pain medicine use in our country is out of control, and many people have developed a dependence on it and will plainly state it doesn’t really help their pain that much. But, they have to take it or start symptoms of withdrawal - which is highly unpleasant. An interesting statistic to ponder is that the US has only 5% of the world’s population - but we use over 80% of the world’s pain medicine supply.

The four steps to to reduce Rx drug abuse are 1) take medicines only as prescribed, 2) Do not share medicines, 3) Store your medicines safely and securely, and 4) Properly dispose of unused medicines immediately. It is unlawful to take anyone else’s medicine that is a controlled substance, and also illegal to take it out of its issued container, such as to put it in another bottle. So, do not share these meds, and please keep them in a secure, private location. It is a fact that many people who use these medicines properly often unknowingly enable others, such as family members or visitors, to abuse them. Friends and family are the source of 70% of these abused drugs. Telling your doctor that “someone stole my pain meds” may not get you a quick refill - so keep them secure for your own use and guard them accordingly. Lastly, if you do not need them anymore, talk to your provider or to law enforcement about proper disposal.

If you need prescription pain medicines and they are properly given to you by a doctor, then use them as directed. When your pain is better, stop using them and use non-narcotic alternatives. In fact, try NOT to use them, as they can be habit forming and dangerous, even deadly if abused. The bottom line is just... “Think About It!”