



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Dying for Pain Relief

Overdoses of Prescription Opioid Pain Relievers and Other Drugs Among Women – United States, 1999-2010

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

It's an increasingly common story. A woman is found dead in her home from a prescription pain killer overdose. Overdosing on these drugs is a major public health problem in the U.S. Men are still more likely to die from an overdose; however, in the past decade, deaths have skyrocketed among women.

Dr. Karin Mack is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. She's joining us today to discuss the growing problem of pain killer overdoses among women. Welcome to the show, Karin.

[Dr. Mack] Thanks for having me.

[Dr. Gaynes] Karin, what is the impact of prescription pain killer overdoses in women?

[Dr. Mack] In 2010, there were over 6,600 prescription pain killer deaths among women. In addition, there were over 200,000 emergency department visits for prescription pain killer misuse or abuse.

[Dr. Gaynes] Is the problem getting worse?

[Dr. Mack] Yes, the problem is getting worse. Mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters are dying from these overdoses at rates never seen before. Prescription pain killer overdose deaths increased fivefold among women between 1999 and 2010. One reason is that women are more likely to experience chronic pain than men. They are also more likely to be given prescription pain killers in higher doses and use them for longer periods than men.

[Dr. Gaynes] Karin, what sort of behavior does one see in a person who is overusing pain killers?

[Dr. Mack] If you see someone taking higher than prescribed doses, seeking prescriptions from more than one doctor, and are struggling at work or at home, there's cause for concern.

[Dr. Gaynes] What should a person do if they or someone they know is struggling with the overuse of these drugs?

[Dr. Mack] They should talk to a health care provider. They can also call 1-800-662-HELP

[Dr. Gaynes] Karin, where can listeners get more information about prescription pain killers?

[Dr. Mack] They can go to cdc.gov/injury for more information.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Karin. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Karin Mack about the emerging problem of prescription drug overdoses among women.

If someone you know is struggling with prescription pain killers, encourage them to contact a health care provider or call 1-800-662-HELP.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.