

## **“A Pill For Every Ill” Crackdown**

Hospital admissions for prescription drug-related substance abuse increased 400% between 1998 and 2008. The AP (7/16) reports that the White House released a new study Thursday that showed "a 400 percent increase in the number of people admitted to treatment for abusing prescription pain medication." The study examined rates of admission among people 12 or older in the 10 years from 1998 to 2008 and found increases in abuse across "every gender, race, ethnicity, education and employment level, and all regions of the country."

According to the Christian Science Monitor (7/15, Goodale), the White House report "underscores the need for regulation amid a culture that has become increasingly reliant on ever-more-powerful and addictive prescription drugs, say experts." The Monitor quotes several experts, including Dr. Scott Glaser, president of Pain Specialists of Greater Chicago, who said, "There has been a strong push among doctors in recent years to be more aggressive in addressing pain. ... This has led to the dramatic increase in opiates such as morphine, but the problem is there hasn't been a whole lot of science to go along with that."

HealthDay (7/15, Preidt) reported that the study was based data from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Treatment Episode Data Set, "a reporting system involving treatment facilities from across the country" that "showed that the proportion of admission rates increased from 1.8 percent to 8.1 percent for men and from 3.5 percent to 13.3 percent for women. Rates increased from 1.9 percent to 9.7 percent for those with an eighth-grade education or less, and from 3.8 percent to 12.1 percent for those with more than a high school education."

Delaware will use database to deter prescription drug abuse. The Newark (DE) Post (7/15) reported that Delaware Gov. Jack Markell has "signed into law an effort designed to reduce prescription drug abuse by limiting 'doctor shopping' by addicts." The law "authorizes the state's Office of Controlled Substances to establish a database of prescription information from pharmacies in the state." Doctors will be able to "check drug interactions and screen for possible drug abuse. Pharmacies, excluding those in healthcare facilities, would be required to report specific information to the program." The Post noted that "the Director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, R. Gil Kerkikowske was on hand for the signing."