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# Prescription validation can help state fight drug abuse

By PAUL SLOAN GUEST COLUMNIST

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In response to recent news stories and columns on prescription drug abuse, I would like to add the following:

- 1) The abuse of prescription medicines is at epidemic proportions not just locally but all across the country. Prescription abuse affects all members of society: teenagers, law enforcement officers, firefighters, lawyers, doctors, mothers, fathers and even grandparents. No one is immune from this epidemic.
- 2) The recent news of the Sarasota County deputy who is believed to have had 11 doctors prescribing him controlled substances at the same time should not cast a shadow on the Sheriff's Office as a whole. I can attest that the Sheriff's Office detectives and officers have served my organization with the highest level of service I could imagine possible. The detective whom I work with is in my office weekly to deal with medication diversion issues, doctor shoppers and patients who use forged medical records -- all of which are serious crimes. The Sheriff's Office investigates every case I refer to it (approaching 60 in the past 15 months) and has forwarded many to the state attorney's office for prosecution.
- 3) The Sarasota County Commission has recently begun to look at local legislation to require a photo ID to be presented when purchasing a prescription for a controlled medication (painkillers, muscle relaxers). The commissioners took this action after being informed of the issue by Cindy Harney of the local group Families Against Addictive Drug Abuse and myself. However, the idea of such local legislation belongs to the Sarasota County Sheriff's Department detective whom I have come to know well through his work with my office.

This legislation is not the solution to the problem, but it is an effective start at putting a dent in controlling the epidemic. With this statute, scripts could be traced to the filler when it becomes known that a crime (forgery, stolen scripts) involving that prescription has been committed. Cindy and I commend the Sarasota County commissioners for taking quick, decisive action regarding this epidemic, and we are hopeful that they will be successful in their goals. It should also be noted that the Manatee County Commission may also follow in this legislation, thanks to the work of FAADA.

4) Florida ranks high in the diversion of prescription medicine and even higher for deaths due to these medicines; locally we are No.6 in the state for deaths from these medications. Yet, until recently the silence on this issue has been deafening. Cindy Harney and Ruth Lyerly (both of whom have lost children to this epidemic and are founders of FAADA) at their "Last Call to Action" meeting made a statement that got my attention: "If 109 manatees washed up dead on Siesta Key Beach, people would be outraged. Yet, 109 kids have ended up in the local morgue and there is silence."

5) It is time that the silence ends and people get involved:

Contact your state senators and representatives. Ask them to act on the pending 2009 legislation for a Prescription Validation Program. The state has failed over the past several years to enact this simple, extremely low-cost legislation to put in place this program, which is in effect in 38 states. This legislation would put to an end doctor shopping without disclosing personal medical information. State Sen. Mike Bennett and state Reps. Bill Galvano, Ron Reagan and Keith Fitzgerald have all offered their support. Let them hear from you as well.

Come out to the "Call To Action" tonight at 7 p.m. at Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine. The forum will be in Lecture Hall 212. The college is at 5000 Lakewood Ranch Blvd., Bradenton. Contact Diane Ramseyer to confirm your attendance at (941) 650-4856.

Support Families Against Addictive Drug Abuse ([www.faada.info](http://www.faada.info)) in its mission to keep another child from becoming a victim. No parent should ever have to face what Cindy Harney and Ruth Lyerly have dealt with. They have turned their personal tragedies into a mission to keep this from happening to one more family.

And, lastly, be aware of prescription drug abuse; no one is immune from it.

Paul Sloan is administrator of First Choice Pain Care Clinic in Venice. Phone: (941) 480-0200. For more on the validation proposal, visit: [flgov.com/law\\_enforcement](http://flgov.com/law_enforcement)

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