

Rise in Treatment Admissions for Prescription Pain Relievers

Concern over the nonmedical use of prescription pain relievers is increasing across the Nation. According to recent SAMHSA data, in 2008, past-year nonmedical use of pain relievers among people age 12 or older was second highest in prevalence among illicit drugs, after marijuana.

Substance abuse treatment admissions reporting primary pain reliever abuse have also increased. A new report from SAMHSA's Treatment Episode Data Set compares the characteristics of admissions reporting primary abuse of pain relievers in 1998 with corresponding admissions in 2008.

In 1998, approximately 18,300 admissions (1.1 percent of all admissions) reported primary abuse of pain relievers as compared to approximately 105,680 (5.6 percent) in 2008.

Age and Gender

Substance abuse treatment admissions for primary pain reliever abuse were younger in 2008 than in 1998. The average age at admission decreased by nearly 6 years for these admissions, from 37.4 years in 1998 to 31.7 years in 2008.

Driving this decrease were admissions age 18 to 34. Admissions for primary abuse of prescription pain relievers in 2008 were more than 3 times as likely as those in 1998 to be age 18 to 24 (26.5 versus 7.5 percent). The percentage age 25 to 34 also increased from 29.1 percent in 1998 to 38.5 percent in 2008.

Primary pain reliever admissions in 1998 were about equally distributed between males and females (49.6 and 50.4 percent, respectively). In 2008, however, a slightly higher percentage of these admissions were male rather than female (53.5 versus 46.5 percent).

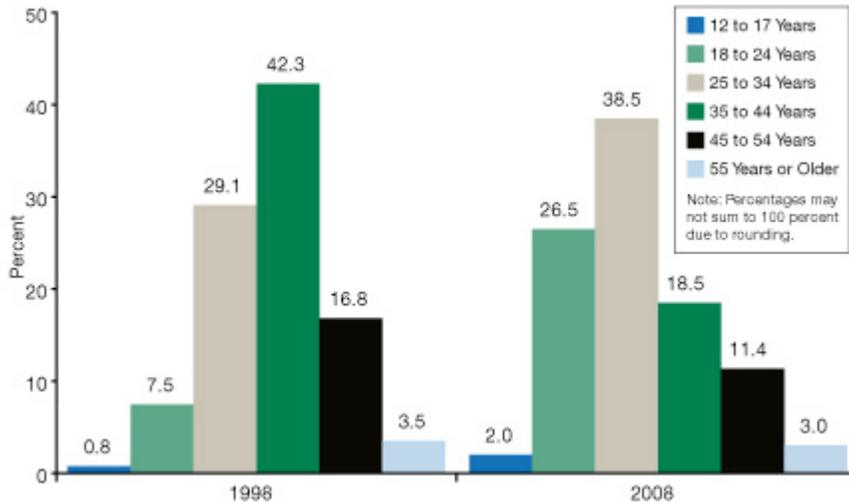
Other Characteristics

Employment status. Admissions for primary pain reliever abuse in 2008 were more likely than those in 1998 to be unemployed (41.1 versus 28.6 percent).

Previous treatment. Among admissions reporting primary abuse of pain relievers, the percentage that had no prior treatment episodes increased from 34.9 percent in 1998 to 42.1 percent in 2008.

Co-occurring disorders. The percentage of primary pain reliever admissions with a co-occurring psychiatric disorder increased from 19.4 percent in 1998 to 38.6 percent in 2008.

Substance Abuse Treatment Admissions Age 12 or Older Reporting Primary Pain Reliever Abuse, by Age Group: 1998 and 2008



Source: SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (September 23, 2010). Figure 1. Substance Abuse Treatment Admissions Age 12 or Older Reporting Primary Pain Reliever Abuse, by Age Group: 1998 and 2008. [Characteristics of Substance Abuse Treatment Admissions Reporting Primary Abuse of Prescription Pain Relievers: 1998 and 2008](#). Rockville, MD.

Source: http://www.samhsa.gov/samhsanewsletter/Volume_18_Number_6/RiseInTreatmentAdmissions.aspx