

Opioid Safety and Controlled Substance Reports

Key Points

- **Data from the Idaho Medicaid program are consistent with national and regional trends showing a significant increase in serious adverse events from prescription opioid use.**
- **In the last 3 months, over 1,200 Idaho Medicaid patients were prescribed opioids in large quantities by more than one provider; most used more than one pharmacy.**
- **You may obtain a controlled substance report from the Idaho Board of Pharmacy if you would like to review the prescription fill history of one of your patients.**
- **Idaho Medicaid can require that patients receive narcotics from a single pharmacy, if referred to the pharmacy lock-in program.**

Adverse events, including fatalities, due to prescription medications are an increasing problem in the United States. The safety of narcotic analgesics is of particular concern as these agents are controlled substances and their use is associated with documented central nervous system depression, tolerance, dependence, withdrawal, and drug-seeking behaviors. Recently, opioid abuse has shown explosive growth in the US, rising faster than any other prescription drug of addiction. Over the last decade, non-medical use of prescriptive psychotherapeutics increased 162% in the US; with more than half of this population using prescription pain relievers.¹ Data available from Utah indicate that death due to opioid poisoning in the absence of illicit drugs has increased 150% since 2001.²

In clinical practice, it is common for patients who abuse opioids to obtain their prescriptions from multiple prescribers and/or pharmacies. A search of the Idaho Medicaid database in the last 3 months revealed that there were over 1,200 patients prescribed opioids by at least two different providers (with different addresses) for non-malignant pain indications. About 70% of these patients had their prescriptions filled at two or more different pharmacies. The Idaho Medicaid pharmacy lock-in program is designed to address this issue and can require that patients receive narcotics from a single pharmacy. For information contact Idaho Medicaid at 208-364-1829 or 866-827-9967 weekdays from 8 AM to 5 PM.

An opioid taken in high doses or quantities or in combination with multiple other opioid products can result in significant adverse events, including fatalities. Risk of respiratory depression is especially increased if opioids are combined with benzodiazepines, skeletal muscle relaxants, or alcohol. A search of the last 15 years has shown that **the proportion of Idaho Medicaid adults determined to be high opioid users has more than doubled** (see Figure 1 on next page). In addition, **the proportion of high utilizers with adverse events (primarily respiratory depression) has more than tripled** (see Figure 2 on next page). Reasons for this may include increasing use of higher doses and/or concomitant CNS depressants.

(Available online at <http://idahodur.isu.edu>, information current as of September 2009)

*Idaho Drug Utilization Review Program
Educational Leaflet for Physicians, Pharmacists, and other Healthcare Practitioners*

Figure 1. Idaho Medicaid Adults with High Opioid Use—rate increased from 34/1000 patients to 57/1000

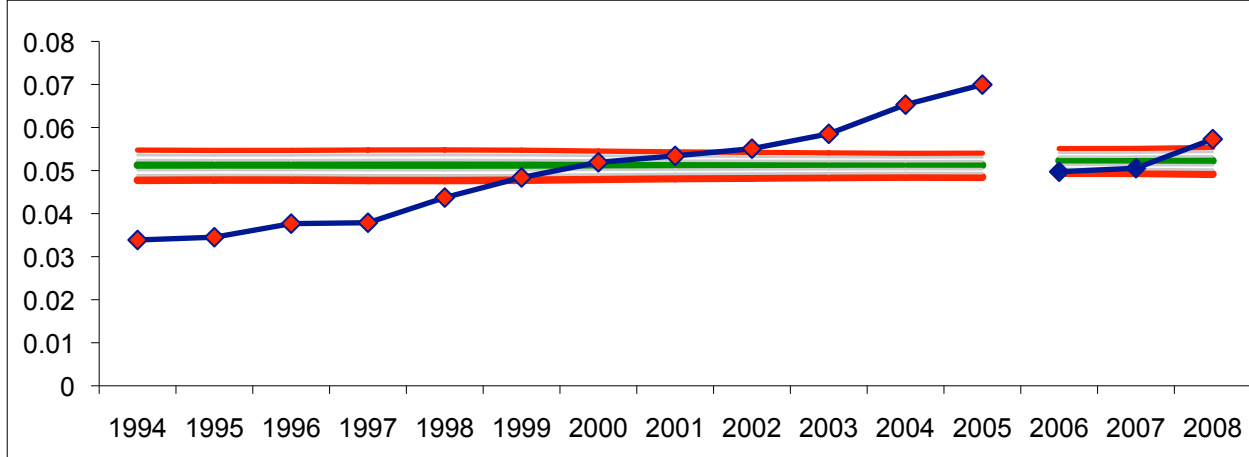
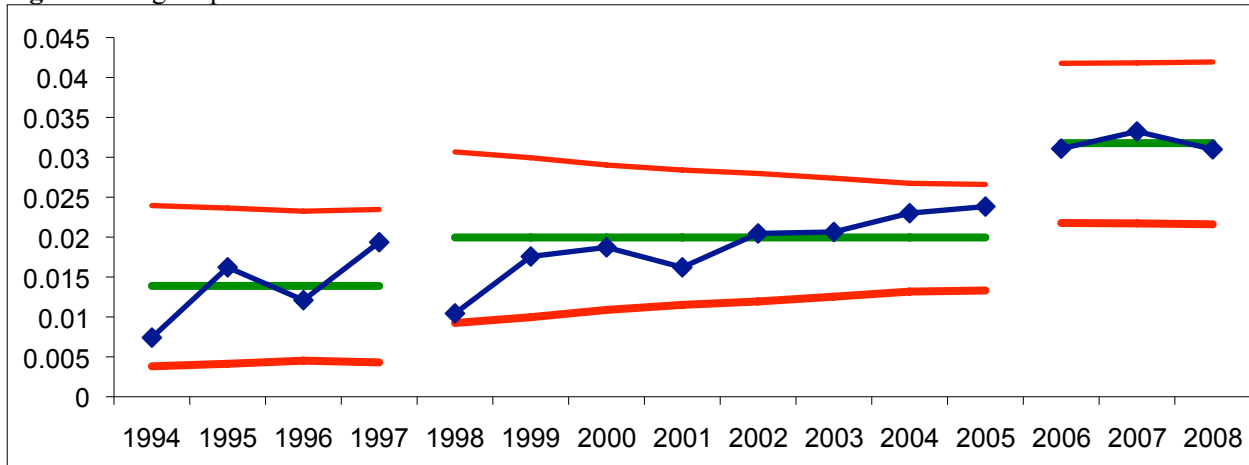


Figure 2. High Opioid Users with an Adverse Event—rate increased from 7/1000 users to 31/1000



If you are concerned about one of your patient's use of opioids or any other controlled substance, a free report may be requested from the Idaho Board of Pharmacy. The report will include an entire controlled substance fill history *in Idaho* including provider(s) name, filling pharmacy(ies), drug(s) name, and date and quantity filled. This information is monitored by the Board and is updated regularly. To acquire a report, you must be either a practitioner or pharmacist with a license to prescribe or dispense controlled substances. The patient must be one that you are currently caring/dispensing for or are considering caring/dispensing for. To request a report, you may contact the Idaho Board of Pharmacy at (208) 334-2356 to obtain a form that you must fill out and fax back. Requests may also be made online (<http://bop.accessidaho.org/>), but you must first contact the Board to register for a user ID. Once a request is submitted, you may expect a response within 24-48 hours.

References

1. Manchikanti L, Singh A. Therapeutic opioids: A ten-year perspective on the complexities and complications of escalating use, abuse, and nonmedical use of opioids. *Pain Physician* 2008;11(suppl):S63-88.
2. Utah Health Status Update: Prescription Medication Overdose Deaths in Utah. Utah Department of Health. November 2008. Accessed online September 4, 2009 at http://health.utah.gov/opha/publications/hsu/08Nov_RxDrugDth.pdf.

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