**Why the Montana Prescription Drug Registry Matters To Your Patients**

**From a Mother in Eastern Montana:**

Individuals who have never had an addiction problem, myself included, have a difficult time understanding the extent of control it holds over the addict. For the past few years our family has been impacted with the reality of how difficult opiate addiction is to overcome and how ill-prepared any community, law enforcement included, is in dealing with this issue. It is not so much a lack of compassion as it is a general lack of knowledge as to the seriousness of the addiction. I use the analogy of trying to describe the color blue to a blind person. It can almost be understood but never completely.

Our daughter attended the Montana Chemical Dependency Center for six weeks. I can state unequivocally that six weeks is not near enough time. She has been in and out of court in three different counties, and is facing several felony charges. She is currently being held in the local jail on the charge of forging several prescriptions to obtain oxycodone at pharmacies in our town. It is my opinion that these individuals desperately need treatment, not incarceration. I’m not trying to excuse my daughter’s criminal behavior, just trying to understand the underlying cause. Both my husband and I are former law enforcement. We did our best to raise our daughter with a sound set of values and respect for the law. She does not come from either a broken home or an abusive childhood.

**From an Interview with a Mother in Havre:**

“My son was on a drug, methadone,” Lois said. It killed him. Lois’s son had already beaten prescription drug abuse once when he was diagnosed with cancer in his early 30s. “As a result of the cancer,” Lois said, “he hit the pill lottery.” Doctors prescribed him OxyContin, hydrocodone and others, Lois said. Eventually, he was put on methadone, a synthetic opioid often used to treat patients “de-toxing” from drugs like heroin. Lois said she’s not entirely sure why her son was on methadone. Certainly, it was less expensive than the other pain-relievers he had been taking. By the time her son’s cancer went into remission, Lois’s son had fallen back into drug addiction. She said he was on methadone for several months before his death. He turned 32 four days before he died in the spring of 2007. Just days before, his doctor had written him a prescription for 90 more methadone pills.

But he wanted to get off the drug. “The last conversation I ever had with him, he was talking about getting off methadone,” she said. “He was planning his life, he was buying a house. He believed he had the world by the tail and he didn’t live to see it.” The young man died with his friend, who had also taken methadone. “He left behind a son who will never get to have his daddy hug him and say ‘I love you,’ a broken-hearted mother, two brothers and a sister whose lives will never be the same without their big brother,” Lois said. “He believed he would live to enjoy a drug-free life, but was outsmarted by the predator.”
**From a Mother in the Flathead:**

I’m not naive enough to believe my daughter is cured. As a mother, I have firsthand knowledge of the devastating effects that misuse of prescription drugs can have on the user and family members. My 38-year-old daughter’s addiction became apparent to me only a few years ago. For many years she was able to successfully hide it from the family. I attribute her success at hiding the addiction because prescription drugs are small and easy to hide. They do not have an odor that one can detect. There are many containers that can disguise them as mere vitamins.

From the start, when I began to notice behavior changes in my daughter, I contemplated a mental disorder or depression, which led to psychologists and psychiatrists prescribing more drugs. Then an injury that required my daughter to have surgery catapulted her into massive prescription and non-prescription drug use: OxyContin, Fentanyl patches, methamphetamines, alcohol, cocaine, marijuana etc. She was getting them anywhere she could - stealing them, buying them on the street, over the internet and doctor shopping. About two years ago, when I was sure of what was happening and when a crisis presented itself, I drove my daughter to the Kalispell hospital emergency room, desperate for help.

Even the emergency room physicians and attendants didn’t seem to have a standard protocol to follow when it came to a mother bringing her addicted adult daughter to the emergency room. I was finally able to find help for my daughter outside the state of Montana. She checked into to an open-ended treatment program in Canada and stayed for 60 days. My daughter has been out of treatment for over a year. She relapsed within the first few months of being home, but a very proactive aftercare program, which included Suboxone, pulled her back into recovery. She continues to work her recovery plan every day with the help of 12 step programs she attends. I’m not naive enough to believe she is cured. I’ve learned a lot about the ‘Science of Addiction’ thanks to the treatment program in Canada, and further reading and study on the subject. I am continually amazed at the number of people who do not understand this debilitating and devastating disease of the brain.

**From the Sister of an Addict in Billings:**

My brother is a prescription drug addict. He had a back injury about four years ago and has been overprescribed and abusing prescription drugs. He has been in rehab twice and is now clean, but because of job losses, reputation issues, and continuing pain — he continues to suffer. He is only 28 — was married and had a baby girl. Because of the addiction, he is divorced and trying to make life more manageable. My brother was not selling, making, distributing drugs and was not a ‘criminal.’ He was able to ‘doctor hop’ and was able to get painkillers. Pharmacies didn’t ask questions, nor did doctors. We couldn’t get help for my brother until he committed a crime. Then, in a late night drive that he has no recollection of, he ran into a truck, barely missing three young girls camping in a tent in their front yard.

**Check the prescription history before you prescribe or dispense. It matters.**

www.MPDR.mt.gov
www.MPDRInfo.mt.gov
dlibsmpdr@mt.gov
406-841-2240

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