

Opioid prescription data now available on Dept. of Health website

PROVIDENCE – Beginning Aug. 22, the Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) is thought to be the first state to make data from its Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) available to the public on the Department's website. Rhode Islanders will be able to learn what percentage of prescribers are enrolled in and utilize the PMP, the number of prescriptions being written for controlled substances, and some of the trends in substance abuse. Data is available from 2004, when the PMP started in Rhode Island.

"All prescribers need to check the data in the PMP every time a prescription for a controlled substance is written," said Director of Health Michael Fine, MD. "It is not enough to just enroll in the PMP. Prescribers need to consult the patient-specific data to check for any patterns that may indicate a

substance abuse problem. The PMP is full of valuable information that is vastly under-utilized." Currently only 25% of Rhode Island prescribers have registered for the PMP.

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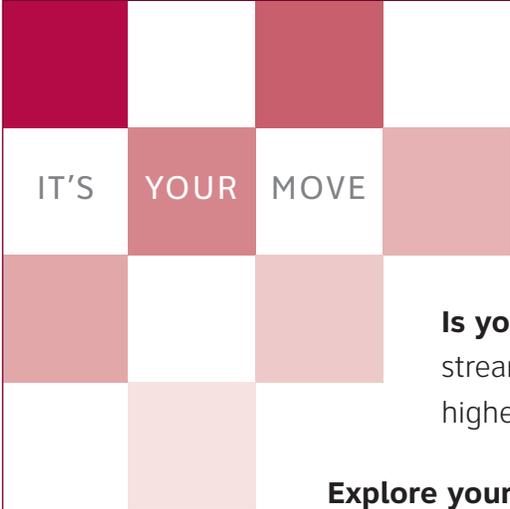
The PMP data show that the amount and volume of prescribed opioids is not decreasing. On a national level, data from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) identifies that Rhode Island has the fourth highest rate in the country for prescribing benzodiazepines. Decreasing the amount

of opioids prescribed and dispensed is a key component to combating the epidemic of substance abuse.

In addition, information from the PMP show that an increasing number of Rhode Islanders are "doctor shopping" – meaning a patient goes to multiple providers and multiple pharmacies in an attempt to obtain prescription opioids that they do not need. From 2004 – 2013, the number of individuals who went to five or more prescribers and five or more pharmacies to get schedule 2 or 3 medications doubled.

"We need to fight this public health epidemic together," said Dr. Fine. "We want everyone to see what the numbers tell us, and we want everyone to collaborate in the effort to make all of the numbers improve." ❖

<http://www.health.ri.gov/data/controlledsubstances/>



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