



The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse
at Columbia University

"You've Got Drugs!" IV

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NEW CASA WHITE PAPER FINDS 70 PERCENT RISE IN WEB SITES ADVERTISING, SELLING PRESCRIPTION OPIOIDS, STIMULANTS, DEPRESSANTS**

DRUGS AVAILABLE TO CHILDREN; PRESCRIPTION RARELY REQUIRED

CALIFANO TO TESTIFY BEFORE SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE ON ROGUE ONLINE PHARMACIES

WASHINGTON, DC, May 16, 2007 – For three years straight the number of rogue Web sites selling controlled prescription drugs like OxyContin, Vicodin, Valium, and Ritalin has increased, according to a new White Paper released by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse (CASA) at Columbia University.

The White Paper, "*You've Got Drugs!*" IV: *Prescription Drug Pushers on the Internet*, to be released today at the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on "Rogue Online Pharmacies: The Growing Problem of Internet Drug Trafficking," found a total of 581 Web sites advertising or selling controlled prescription drugs in 2007 compared to 342 sites in 2006.

Sites advertising controlled prescription drugs increased by 135 percent, from 168 in 2006 to 394 in 2007. Sites selling these drugs increased by seven percent from 174 in 2006 to 187 in 2007. Of the 187 sites found selling controlled prescription drugs this year, only two were certified by the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy as Verified Internet Pharmacy Practice Sites™.

"The easy availability of addictive opioids, depressants and stimulants has, for many children, made the Internet a greater threat than the illegal street drug dealer," said Joseph A. Califano, Jr., CASA's chair and president and former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare. "The Internet has become a pharmaceutical candy store stocked with addictive drugs, available at the click of a mouse to any kid with a credit card number."

Other findings in the White Paper include:

- 84 percent of sites selling these drugs did not require a prescription.
- Of the 16 percent that claimed to require a prescription, most (57 percent) simply ask that it be faxed, allowing a customer to forge it or use the same prescription many times to load up on these drugs.

- Over the past four years, the number of sites selling controlled prescription drugs has increased steadily from 154 in 2004 and 2005 to 187 in 2007.
- Benzodiazepines (Xanax and Valium) continue to be the most frequently offered controlled prescription drug, sold on 79 percent of the sites; followed by opioids (Vicodin and OxyContin) on 64 percent of the sites.
- There are no controls stopping sale of these drugs to children.

Among the CASA White Paper recommendations:

- Clarifying federal law to prohibit sale or purchase of controlled prescription drugs on the Internet without an original copy of a prescription issued by a DEA certified physician, licensed in the state of purchase, based on a physical examination and evaluation.
- Requiring certification of online pharmacies to assure that they meet rigorous standards of professional practice.

For four years CASA, in collaboration with Beau Dietl & Associates, has been tracking online access to controlled prescription drugs, performing the same analysis over the course of a comparable period. The 581 sites represent the number documented in 210 hours in the first quarter of the year as offering opioids, depressants and stimulants.

In 2004 CASA released *"You've Got Drugs!" I: Prescription Drug Pushers on the Internet*, which found the Internet to be a wide-open channel for distribution of dangerous and addictive prescription drugs. In 2005 CASA released *Under the Counter: The Diversion and Abuse of Controlled Prescription Drugs in the U.S.*, which found that between 1992 and 2003, while the U.S. population increased 14 percent, the number of Americans abusing these drugs rose 94 percent and the number of 12 to 17 year-olds admitting to such drug abuse jumped 212 percent.

CASA is the only national organization that brings together under one roof all the professional disciplines needed to study and combat all types of substance abuse as they affect all aspects of society. CASA has issued 64 reports and white papers, published one book, conducted demonstration projects focused on children, families and schools at 190 sites in 72 cities and counties in 29 states plus Washington, DC and a Native American tribal reservation, and has been evaluating the effectiveness of drug and alcohol treatment, in a variety of programs and drug courts. For more information visit <http://www.casacolumbia.org/>.

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