

A wrong way trend

The latest figures from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services suggest Americans are increasing the amount of medical care and drugs they use. Needless to say, the number of “adverse medical events” is also increasing. Consider these statistics:

Patients in the US made an estimated 1.2 billion visits to physician offices and hospital OPDs [hospital outpatient departments] and EDs [hospital emergency departments], a rate of 4.0 visits per person annually.

Between 1995 and 2005, population visit rates increased by about 20 percent in primary care offices, surgical care offices, and OPDs; 37 percent in medical specialty offices; and 7 percent in EDs.

The leading treatment provided at ambulatory care visits was medicinal, with 71.3 percent of all visits having one or more medications prescribed, up by 10 percent since 1995 when encounters with drug therapy represented 64.9 percent of all visits.

In 2005, 2.4 billion medications were prescribed or administered at these visits.

Approximately 27.3 percent of medications prescribed or administered at ambulatory care visits in non-emergency settings were for new prescriptions, whereas 72.7 percent were for continued prescriptions.

The rate of ED visits for adverse effects of medical treatment among seniors increased from 4.9 per 1,000 persons in

1992 to 14.2 per 1,000 persons in 2005.

In essence, Americans are visiting their medical physician or hospital outpatient facility a lot more often than they did 10 years ago – literally four times a year, on average. Part of this increase is considered the result of our aging population. When they do make such visits, more than 70 percent of the “ambulatory care” visits (approximately 90 percent of all visits) result in at least one drug prescription. Remember, the average person makes four visits a year.

Because of their drug-oriented focus, America’s medical practitioners are prescribing 2.4 billion prescriptions per year. This works out to an average of almost eight prescriptions for every man, woman and child in the U.S. every year. And if that statistic isn’t startling enough, consider that it does not include over-the-counter (OTC) drugs, which needless to say, push that number much, much higher.

And if you are like me, you know there are people who are trying to live life under the influence of a multitude of prescriptions each year. They have to, in order to keep the average at eight prescriptions, because I don’t take any!

As I read through the report, I noted the top three classes of drug prescriptions in 2005. You might be surprised by the sheer number prescribed during a single year.

DR. PROODIAN’S PRESS



By Dr. James Proodian

Class of Drug	# Prescribed/ Administered*
Antidepressants	117 million
Antihypertensive Agents	113 million
NSAIDs	110 million

*During ambulatory care visits (non-emergency settings)

This paints a sad but accurate picture of the health of most medically oriented American patients. (By the way, coming in at 13th on the list are “vitamins or minerals,” with 74 million prescriptions per year. This works out to only one vitamin prescription for every four people in the U.S.)

The increase in medical visits and drug prescriptions has resulted in over 10 million visits for the “adverse effect of medical treatment” per year. While this seems to be a relatively small percentage of the total, it represents an alarming impact on the health of millions of people. Hopefully, this statistic will add to the growing awareness of the risks inherent in a medical, drug-oriented approach to health.

People have choices when it comes to managing their health. They can choose to lead a wellness lifestyle or they can turn to drugs (and then more drugs to manage the side effects of the first round of drugs). That’s an important decision with important consequences, and it should

be clear by now that chiropractic and natural treatment methods have an important role to play.

We need to enlighten people about what true health really is. They need to understand the concept of wellness and recognize that it doesn’t come from a drug. This should be an easy conversation for those who have had (or know someone who has) a drug reaction or any adverse medical event.

Every year, American doctors of chiropractic see an estimated 15 million patients. While that’s only 5 percent of the U.S. population, it is a very significant number. If each patient told just a few friends and family members about the value of this natural treatment modality, many would begin to move away from the medical drug model. This would awaken more people to the value of chiropractic and other natural treatment alternatives such as nutrition, fitness, massage, and physical therapy, and help reverse the trend of taking ever-increasing amounts of prescription drugs.

Dr. James Proodian is an author, educator, and healthcare practitioner specializing in chiropractic rehabilitation and other natural healing techniques. He also provides free health lectures and health screenings throughout Monmouth County. To have him speak at your company, school, or organization, contact the Natural Healthcare Center at 732-222-2219. Dr. Proodian’s other health articles can be found at www.NaturalHealthcareCenter.com.