

## **DEWS Investigates Study Finds Maryland OxyContin® Abusers Tend to Be Polydrug Users**

While DEWS staff have received reports of the abuse of OxyContin® and other oxycodone products from about eight Maryland counties, very little about this trend can be learned from traditional indicators like treatment admissions. In an attempt to learn more about the abuse and diversion of the drug, DEWS staff conducted interviews with persons who had a history of OxyContin abuse and were in private substance abuse treatment programs.\* Although the original expectation was that this population would have limited problems with other drugs, all five of the people interviewed had been dependent on heroin and had abused cocaine and multiple prescription drugs at some point in their lives (see table below). According to the authors, these findings need to be replicated because “[i]t is possible that people with limited drug histories or who developed problems solely with OxyContin may not be in treatment because their drug use is sustainable and remains hidden from researchers. Such persons may have more benign drug histories and fewer drug problems than the subjects interviewed in this study” (p. 4).

### **Drug Histories of Five Maryland OxyContin® Abusers**

Subject**	Illicit Drug Use History:		Timing of OxyContin and Heroin Use	Initial Source of OxyContin	Method of Use
	Pre-OxyContin	Post-OxyContin			
<b>Jane</b>	Alcohol, cigarettes, heroin, marijuana, powder cocaine, morphine		OxyContin was used 29 years after heroin	Prescription	Oral
<b>Doug</b>	Alcohol, marijuana, powder cocaine	Crack, LSD, ecstasy, heroin	OxyContin was used approximately two years prior to heroin	Acquaintance	Oral, Snorting
<b>Rose</b>	Marijuana, PCP, alcohol, crack, powder cocaine, cigarettes	Heroin	OxyContin was used approximately seven years prior to heroin	Prescription	Oral, Snorting, Chewing
<b>Bill</b>	Marijuana, alcohol, ecstasy, cigarettes, PCP	Powder cocaine, LSD, mushrooms, heroin	OxyContin was used approximately two years prior to heroin	Friends	Snorting
<b>Pam</b>	Alcohol, ecstasy, cigarettes, PCP, marijuana, powder cocaine, heroin	Crack, ketamine	OxyContin was used approximately three years after heroin	Drug Dealer	Snorting, Intravenous

\*Recruitment problems and time constraints limited the number of patients we were able to interview during the three month study period. See the full DEWS Investigates report for more information.

\*\*The names of the subjects have been changed.

SOURCE: Maryland Drug Early Warning System (DEWS), CESAR. “OxyContin® Abuse in Maryland,” *DEWS Investigates*, June 2004. For more information, contact Erin Artigiani at erin@cesar.umd.edu.