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## Moraga mayor declares Prescription Drug Abuse Awareness Month

By Vera Kochan



Photo Vera Kochan

At the March 27 town council meeting, Mayor Roger Wykle declared March as Prescription Drug Abuse Awareness Month.

Americorps Vista volunteer, Chris Janssen, representing the Contra Costa County Medication Education and Disposal Safety Coalition, accepted the proclamation certificate.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, "Misuse of prescription drugs means taking a medication in a manner or dose other than prescribed; taking someone else's prescription, even if for a legitimate medical complaint such as pain; or taking a medication to feel euphoria (that is, to get high)."

There are three classes of medication most commonly abused. Opioids, which are typically used to treat pain; central nervous system depressants, which are used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders; and stimulants, which are often prescribed to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Fentanyl, an opioid similar to morphine, but 50-100 times more potent, is used to treat patients with severe pain, especially after surgery, and sometimes as a treatment for patients with chronic pain in general. Its abuse has seen the greatest increase in overdose deaths within the last few years.

Results from the 2017 National Survey on Drug Use and Health show "an estimated two million Americans misused prescription pain relievers for the first time within the past year, which averages to approximately 5,480 initiates per day. Additionally, more than one million misused prescription stimulants, 1.5 million misused tranquilizers, and 271,000 misused sedatives for the first time."

Prescription drug abuse can strike young and old alike. Nearly 60 percent of adolescents and young adults surveyed admitted to either buying or receiving prescription drugs, for non-medical use, from a friend or relative. More than 80 percent of older patients (ages 57-85 years) use at least one prescription medication daily which could result in unintentional misuse when combined with over-the-counter medicines, dietary or herbal supplements. These drug interactions along with age-related changes in drug metabolism can make misuse more dangerous to the elderly.

NIDA states, "Patients can take steps to ensure that they use prescription medications appropriately by: following the directions as explained on the label or by the pharmacist; being aware of potential interactions with other drugs as well as alcohol; never stopping or changing a dosing regimen without first discussing it with the doctor; never using another person's prescription and never giving their prescription medications to others; and storing prescription stimulants, sedatives and opioids safely."

To learn more about prescription drugs and other drugs, visit the NIDA website at [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov) or call (877) 643-2644.

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