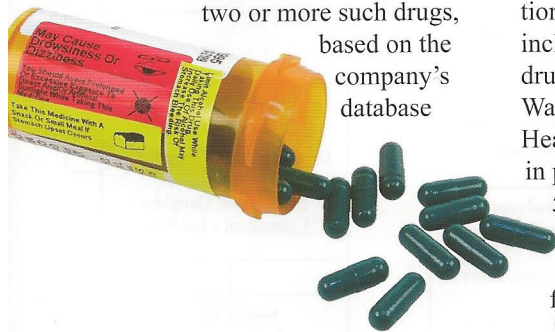


Prescription Nation: More Than 25 Percent of U.S. Children Take Medication on a Chronic Basis

According to Medco Health Solutions, Inc. – the biggest U.S. pharmacy-benefit manager with around 65 million members – more than 25 percent of U.S. kids and teens are taking at least one medication on a chronic basis. Nearly 7 percent are on two or more such drugs, based on the company's database



figures for 2009.

Many of these medications are for well-known childhood ailments such as asthma and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), but children and teens are now taking a wide variety of medications once considered only to be for adults, including statins, diabetes pills, and sleep drugs, according to figures provided to the Wall Street Journal by research firm IMS Health. Prescriptions for antihypertensives in people age 19 and younger could hit 5.5 million this year if the trend through September continues, according to IMS. That would be up 17 percent from 2007, the earliest year available.

Researchers attribute the wide usage in part to unhealthy diets and lack of exercise among children, which lead to too much weight gain and obesity, also fuel the use of some treatments, such as those for hypertension and diabetes.

Medco also notes that central nervous system, endocrine and diabetes, and musculoskeletal and rheumatological drugs will account for nearly 50 percent of drug trend through 2012.

Sources:

Wall Street Journal, "So Young and So Many Pills," December 28, 2010

Medco Health Solutions, Inc., "2010 Drug Trend Report" Executive Summary



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