

FDA SEEKS TO REMOVE OPANA ER FROM MARKET

Opioid prescriptions decline in Oregon

For the first time, the Food and Drug Administration has requested that a prescription opioid be removed from the market.

On June 8, the FDA announced in a press release that for reformulated Opana ER — a time released semi-synthetic opioid — risks outweigh its benefits.

The agency cited a major outbreak of HIV in rural Indiana associated with the drug as a factor in the decision.

“We talked about, at the advisory committee meeting, looking at the generic version of oxycodone immediate release and extended release, so that’s something we are still evaluating,” says Sarah Peddicord, a press officer with the FDA.

An Oregon law aims to thwart opioid addiction by regulating prescription practices. The state’s Prescription Drug Monitoring Program requires that all schedule II, III and IV drug prescriptions be entered into a database. The PDMP quarterly report released in March shows a drop in top prescribed opioids such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, morphine and tramadol compared to 2016 — both morphine and hydrocodone prescriptions dropped by more than 12 percent.

In 2016, the Centers for Disease Control released new guidelines for prescribing opioids because the agency found no evidence of “long-term benefits of opioid therapy for chronic pain.” Opioid addiction is a national public health epidemic and both the FDA and the CDC have formed specialized committees to evaluate and address the crisis.

While opioid prescriptions are on a downward trend, the latest statistics in Lane County show that approximately 36 people died every year from opioid overdoses alone from 2013 through 2015, according to Lane County Public Health.

“At a population level, we are seeing deaths by overdose achieving the numbers once only reserved for deaths by car accidents,” Lane County Public Health Officer Dr. Patrick Luedtke writes in an email.

Dwight Holton, CEO of Lines for Life, a suicide and drug prevention nonprofit, says the FDA’s decision could lead to safer prescribing practices.

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“I think one of the big, evolutionary changes that we are seeing is a shift from even a year ago... has shifted to an understanding that opioid prescribing for chronic pain is simply not safe,” Holton says. “And that rather than needing to take care in our approach to opioid prescribing for chronic pain, more and more prescribers are beginning to believe that giving a chronic pain patient an opioid is not doing them a favor — it’s putting them at risk.”

Holton says the nonprofit is supportive of Oregon House Bill 3440, which would allow the Oregon Health Authority to use the PDMP system to “determine whether practitioners are prescribing opioids or opiates in compliance with guidelines,” according to the bill’s summary.

Additionally, HB 2645, which is geared toward addiction prevention, would require drug manufacturers to develop drug take-back programs and have disposal boxes for customers to drop off their unused prescriptions.

Holton says many opioid addictions begin from unfinished prescriptions in medicine cabinets. According to data from Lane County Public Health, the addictions of four out of five current heroin users stem from first using prescription opioids.

In Scott County, Indiana, the Center for Disease Control found that of the 31 people surveyed in its Opana ER study, 17 were HIV positive and 28 were positive for Hepatitis C. Most interviewees also reported sharing “a quarter of a pill injection with two to four partners,” according to CDC Outbreak Investigations Involving Opana ER.

As far as assessing other opioids, Peddicord says “it’s premature for us to speculate on any other opioids at this time.” ■

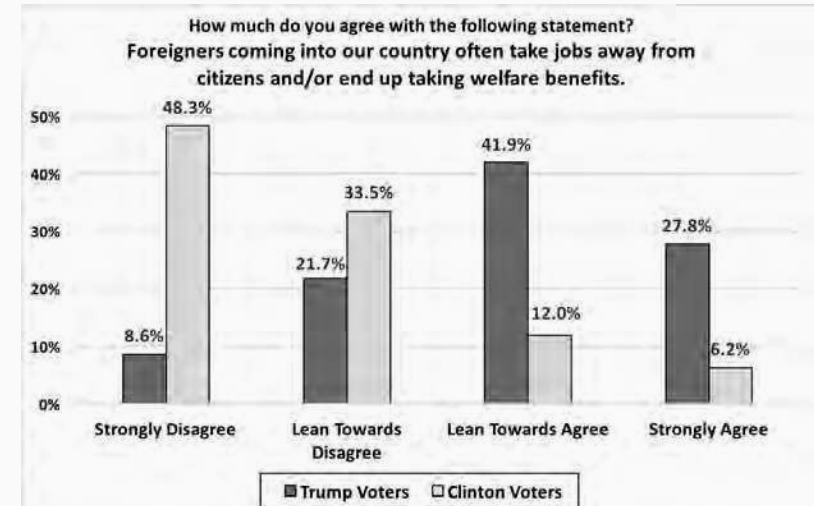
SLANT

- **How many renters get evicted** in Lane County each year? The numbers are not easy to come by, but local demographics mapper Joe Kosewic has tracked the landlord cases that end up in court in Oregon and broken down the numbers by county. Evictions that are uncontested far outnumber actual court cases, he figures. Lane County had 1,794 court-contested evictions in 2016. Multnomah County had 5,446, Washington County had 2,952 and Marion County had 1,951. Kosewic says the Residential Eviction Complaint form doesn’t track whether children are involved in the evictions. “Student residential mobility is a major problem,” he says, “that disrupts the students’ social network and academic development.” Kosewic’s data and graphic maps are available by emailing him at kosewic1@gmail.com.

- This week in kudos: EW’s Corinne Boyer has been awarded a **Journalism and Women Symposium Emerging Journalist Fellowship**. The fellowship is given annually to ten women nationwide who are in the beginning stages of their journalism careers. The fellowship sends Boyer to the JAWS Conference and Mentorship Project, where fellows meet leading women in the journalism field to share their skills and learn new ones.

WE’RE SO SKEWED.

COMPARING DONALD TRUMP VOTERS AND HILLARY CLINTON VOTERS



PolicyInteractive has previously reported that conservatives and liberals have more in common than one would think, but the current political climate is seen to be driving increased political polarization. PI asks the question why are some people attracted to the conservative ideology and others attracted to the liberal ideology? What are the issues that are pulling us apart and why? Watch this space for continuing exploration of why “we’re so skewed.”
 National survey conducted by PolicyInteractive out of Eugene, OR; 198 Trump voters and 209 Clinton voters;
 Nonprobability sample; See full results and methodology at goo.gl/CJ5Xcp.
 Robin Quirke is an associate researcher at PolicyInteractive.

- EW’s Rick Levin and Todd Cooper are finalists in the **2017 Association of Alternative Newsmedia Awards**. Levin is a finalist in the Arts Criticism category for his review of the documentary “It’s Not Funny Anymore — In *Tickled*, journalist David Farrier exposes the wealth, power and abuse behind a bizarre Internet fetish.” Cooper is a finalist in the Photography category for his submission 2016 in Music, a series of ten photographs. The awards will be announced on July 29 at the AAN Convention in D.C.

- It’s an exciting time for Eugene and Oregon, three speakers told the City Club of Eugene June 16. Because of the University of Oregon, **basic scientific research is leading to thriving businesses** right here, and the coming of the billion-dollar Knight campus will accelerate this movement. Speakers were Don Tucker, CEO and chief scientist of Electrical Geodesics; Matt Beaudet, CEO of NemaMetrix; and Richard Geiger, CEO of Dune Sciences. Dr. David Conover, vice president for Research and Innovation at the UO, asked the speakers for their advice to the school. Their answers: foster connections, offer internships for UO students, encourage these outstanding students to stay in Eugene.

- On July 1, **the minimum wage in Lane County** goes up to \$10.25, in Portland metro area to \$11.25 and in “nonurban” counties to \$10. By July 1, 2022, our county will be up to \$13.50. Oregon’s Legislature is doing better than the federal government, but where’s that \$15 an hour, the least we should have in progressive Oregon? Sooner, please.

- Portland-based dance band **The Slants won at the U.S. Supreme Court** June 19 when the justices ruled unanimously that The Slants can trademark their name, offensive or not. The federal Patent and Trademark Office had refused to register the name, ruling it was a racial slur. That was the point, argued Slants founder and bassist Simon Tam. “We were bringing more awareness to issues of oppression by using our art as a platform,” he told EW in March. Said the court: “Speech may not be banned on the ground that it expresses ideas that offend.” The 39-page opinion adds that Trump appointee Neil Gorsuch “took no part in the consideration or decision of this case.”