

Opioids

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figures, Multnomah's 134 pharmacies sold about 262 million pills from 2006-2012, ranging from a high of 18.6 million pills to a low of 7,010. Dividing the total number of pills sold in the county by the county population and by seven years gives a per capita annual rate of 52.7 pills — significantly more than the pharmacy rates calculated of six or less.

By The Oregonian's calculation, the top three Oregon pharmacies were Howard's Drugs in Lake County with a rate of 68 pills sold per county resident per year, followed by Len's Drug in Grant County at 37.5 and Safeway in Willowa County at 35. Using this method nationally, Howard's Drugs is ranked as No. 10 in the U.S. for pill sales per county resident per year, and Len's Drug is No. 89.

According to the figures used by The Oregonian, from 2006-2012, Len's Drug sold 1.91 million pills, Prairie Drug in Prairie City sold 270,260 pills and John Day Pharmacy sold 34,000 pills. Both smaller pharmacies closed, leaving Len's Drug to supply the entire county. Together, the pharmacies sold 2.21 million pills in Grant County, which gives a per capita annual rate of 43.5. This is significantly below the 52.7 rate in Multnomah County and lower than most counties in Oregon.

Rural-urban divide

The top three Oregon pharmacies based on pharmacy rate were located in rural frontier counties, and 26 of the top 100 pharmacies were in Eastern Oregon — Baker with five pharmacies, Union with five, Malheur with four, Umatilla with three, Morrow with two, Harney with two, Grant with two (the drug store in Prairie City is now closed), Lake with one, Willowa with one and Gilliam with one.

But pill sales by these stores paled in comparison to pharmacies in urban counties. The pharmacy with the highest pill sales in Oregon was Kaiser Permanente in Multnomah County with 18.6 million. The next three highest pharmacies also were in Multnomah at 12.7 million, 10.9 million and 10 million.

The fifth largest was a pharmacy in urban Washington County at 8.7 million. No. 6 was another Multnomah pharmacy at 8.5 mil-

lion, followed by three from urban Clackamas County. Urban counties accounted for nine of the top 10 sellers, as well as six of the next 10, nine of the next 10, eight of the next 10 and seven of the next 10.

Using a per capita rate based on total county pill sales, rather than The Oregonian method by pharmacy, a sampling of Oregon counties reveals:

- Willowa County's three pharmacies sold 1.97 million pills from 2006-2012. With 6,893 residents, the rate was 40.89 pills per county resident per year.

- Umatilla County's 13 pharmacies sold 22.1 million pills. Five sold more than 2 million pills. With 74,520 residents, the overall rate was 42.36.

- Union County's seven pharmacies sold 10.07 million pills. Only one pharmacy sold more than 2 million pills. With 25,274 residents, the rate was 56.91.

- Baker County's six pharmacies sold 7.07 million pills. One pharmacy sold more than 2 million pills. With 16,118 residents, the rate was 62.66.

- The 13 pharmacies in Clatsop County sold 17.51 million pills. Four stores sold more than 2 million pills. With 36,866 residents, the overall rate was 67.85.

- With the single pharmacy selling 3.7 million pills and 7,782 residents, Lake County's rate of 68 is an accurate representation of the total annual rate per person, but at least five counties in Oregon had higher rates.

- The highest rate in Oregon was Curry County, where 13.03 million pills were distributed with only 22,294 residents. Only two stores sold more than 2 million pills, but seven of the eight stores sold more than 1 million pills. Although the analysis by pharmacy gives rates of 6.7-24.8 for the top seven stores, the total annual county rate per resident was 83.5.

In terms of market share, the pharmacy per capita figure for rural frontier counties is relatively high. Lake County has one pharmacy for 7,782 residents, and Grant County currently has one pharmacy for 7,278 residents.

According to The Oregonian's figures, the pharmacy per capita figure for urban counties is lower — Marion at one per 5,530 residents, Multnomah at 5,295, Washington at 5,168, Clackamas at 4,884, Jackson at 4,656, Deschutes at 4,407, Lane at

4,125, Linn at 3,679 and Douglas at 3,949. Curry County had one pharmacy per 2,786 residents.

Multnomah had 134 pharmacies, Washington had 100 and Clackamas had 76.

Rural factors

Simply dividing the number of pills sold by each individual pharmacy by the population of the county where the pharmacy was located not only significantly skewed the rate for each pharmacy — it also did not take into account other factors that differentiate counties.

Residents in frontier rural counties can't easily travel out of the county to shop because of distance — more than two hours to the next nearest pharmacy outside of Grant County — and difficult driving terrain. At the same time, out-of-county residents are not likely to drive to a frontier rural county to fill prescriptions. This is not the case with urban counties on Oregon's west side.

Another factor is the industries within a county. According to a May 2019 Economic Opportunities Analysis by Johnson Economics, the timber and forest-related industry has been a significant economic driver in Grant County, with local employment in natural resources jobs running nearly six times the national average. Compared to the state average of 3.8 incidents of nonfatal occupational injuries and illnesses per 100 full-time equivalent workers in 2017, the natural resources industry as a whole had a rate of 5.5, and logging had one of the highest rates in the state at 9.1, according to the Oregon Department of Consumer and Business Services.

An aging population might also see a higher opioid prescription rate, but changes in medical opinion since 2014 may have reduced those numbers, according to pharmacist Greg Armstrong, owner of Len's Drug in Grant County. Prescriptions for opioids for any reason are down now because of the negative publicity and new ideas about pain management, he said, but elderly people get opioid prescriptions for various chronic injuries, cancer or other illnesses that cause severe pain.

According to the 2010 census, 30.5% of the Grant County population was 65 or older compared to 13% for the nation and 13.9% for Oregon. Figures for urban Oregon counties were 10.5% for Multnomah, 10% for Washington, 13.6%

for Clackamas, 15% for Lane, 12.8% for Marion and 17.6% for Jackson.

Armstrong serves on a regional committee studying opioid use. He said much has changed in how opioids are prescribed since 2014, but a need still exists for this class of drugs.

Pharmacists, doctors, health administrators, government officials and the public need to look at the human side of this issue, Armstrong said. Opioids currently are the best drug available for dealing with severe chronic pain and cancer, he said.

Overdose deaths

The high ranking for these frontier counties also does not match up with data on opioid impacts provided by the Oregon Health Authority. The statewide rate in 2000-2017 for overdose deaths from any opioid was 3.5 per 100,000 residents in 2001, nine in 2007 and seven in 2016. During this same time period, the figures for Grant County and other Eastern Oregon counties were too low to count.

Figures for urban counties include Multnomah, 7 per 100,000 residents in 2001, 15 in 2007 and 10.5 in 2016; Washington, 2.5, 5 and 4.5; Clackamas, 2, 8 and 5; Lane, 6, 11 and 5; Marion, 3.5, 7.5 and 5.5; and Jackson, 2.5, 10.5 and 5.5.

For the years 2008-2012, the top counties for deaths by any opioid were Clatsop at 17.8 per 100,000 residents, Baker at 14.9 and Lincoln at 11.3. The counties with the highest rates were found along the west side of the state and in a narrow band along Interstate 84 on the east side, including Umatilla, Union, Baker and Malheur counties. The lowest numbers were mostly for frontier counties, including Grant, Harney, Lake, Crook, Wheeler, Hood River, Wasco, Sherman, Gilliam, Morrow and Jefferson, and the far northeastern county of Willowa. The top three pharmacies for pills sold based on the rate used by The Oregonian were in Lake, Grant and Willowa counties, but the number of deaths by any opioid from 2008-2012 for these three counties was too low to count, according to OHA.

To view The Oregonian's figures, visit projects.oregonlive.com/opioids.

To view The Post's figures, visit washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/dea-pain-pill-database.

Palmer

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worth \$500.

Larson said he lost the pole in the John Day River near Kimberly and offered a \$200 reward for its return.

Sgt. Hutchison called Larson in summer 2018 and informed him he believed Palmer had, or had knowledge about, the pole after a meeting his son had with Palmer, Larson said.

"(Sgt.) Hutchison told me that Deputy Brandon Hutchison told him that during this meeting Sheriff Palmer made a comment to 'guess what I have' motioning to his closet," Larson said in the complaint. "Sheriff Palmer then tells Deputy Brandon about having my fishing pole and describes it to Deputy Hutchison with clear detail."

Larson said Palmer told him in April 2019 he did not have the pole, but it was in the possession of Wes Hammond, a friend of Palmer's from Spray.

"I asked Sheriff Palmer if he knew the pole belonged to me, and he said yes," Larson said. "I asked why I don't have it back then. Sheriff Palmer did not reply."

Larson said he asked OSP to investigate the theft of lost or mislaid property and that Hammond told OSP Trooper Travis Ring he had possession of the pole but gave it to a friend in Texas, who refused to return Ring's calls.

Palmer was present at the event when the fishing pole was presented, Larson said, and he has a recording of a secondary phone call in which Palmer "acknowledges his interactions with Hammond and admits he did not tell Hammond to return it."

Larson said it "is likely that at some point Sheriff Palmer was in possession of lost or mislaid property and still refused to fulfill his lawful responsibility as a sworn law enforcement officer and return it to its lawful owner in violation of the code of conduct for police officers."

Larson said he planned to file a second complaint regarding misuse of public office and use of special deputies to initiate false complaints and documents to obtain a political objective.

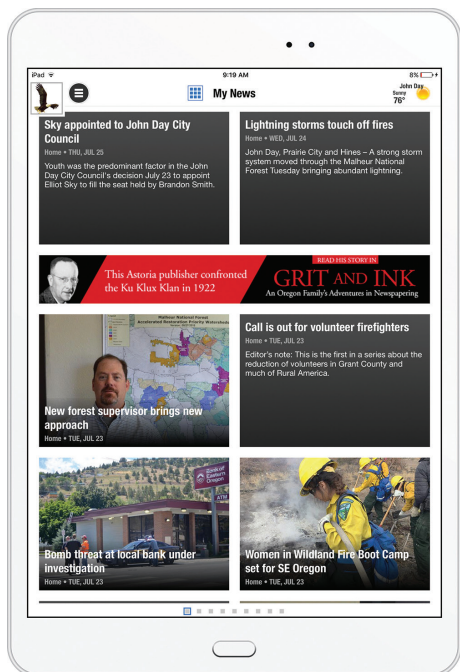
Palmer posted Larson's complaint online with his statement to be transparent, he said.

"It is because of issues such as this, that make me keep fighting for what is right," Palmer said in the statement. "I have taken an Oath and I will fulfill the Oath and I intend to complete my term as your Sheriff."

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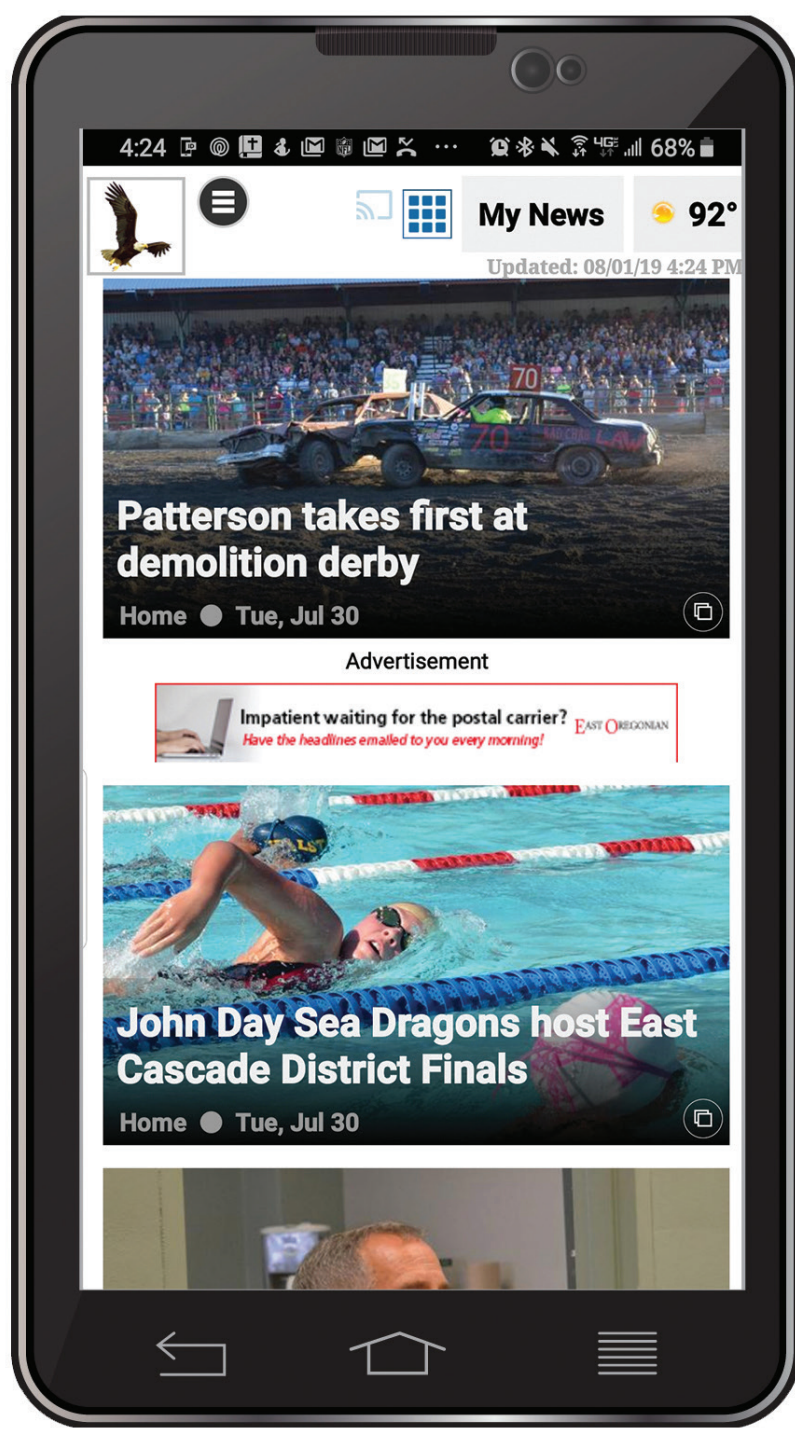
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