

August 31, 2015

Day reserved for Overdose Awareness

August 31, 2015, marked Overdose Awareness Day, a day observed each year since 2001 to remember those lost to drug overdoses. Globally between 102,000 and 247,000 people died from drug overdoses in 2011. Every day 100 people die from drug overdoses in the United States. "Drug overdoses are becoming more and more prevalent not only for illicit drugs, but prescription drugs too," said Brooke McCuiston, Wichita Mountains Prevention Network (WMPN) Regional Prevention Coordinator. In 2012, the number of deaths in the United States from prescription drug abuse surpassed the number of fatalities from motor vehicle accidents. These overdose deaths are becoming a widespread epidemic not only occurring nationally but throughout Oklahoma and locally as well.

In 2011, there were 417 opioid-involved deaths across the State of Oklahoma. Jackson County had 10 unintentional poisoning deaths from 2007-2011, with the majority of these deaths involving pharmaceutical drugs. Additionally in 2012 alone Jackson County had 35 acute drug poisoning inpatient hospital discharges. Although painkillers and other prescribed pharmacy drugs can help a medical condition, careless or unintended use can have tragic long-term consequences.

This epidemic is happening to your communities, your friends, and families. Help is needed to stop these sad trends from continuing. So what can you do as a community member?

1. Properly store your medications out of reach of children and visitors, so that they don't fall into the wrong hands and this also reduces your risk for theft. The majority of people who are non-medically using prescription pain medications report getting them from friends and family members.
2. Do your part to prevent unintentional poisonings and abuse by cleaning out your medicine cabinet and properly disposing your prescription drugs. Do not flush your medications, unless specifically instructed to do so, as this can be bad for the environment. Take your unused medications to prescription drug take back containers for safe and legal disposal. Locally these containers are located at the County Sheriff's Department.

International Overdose Day is a time to reflect and at the same time be aware that overdoses are happening internationally, nationally, and locally. These overdoses can and should be prevented, one community at a time. These effects can have a significant impact on community members. Preventing prescription drug misuse and abuse is everybody's business. Locally the Jackson County Community Health Active Team has a substance awareness committee working on this issue. The committee strives to educate the community on the dangers of prescription drug abuse and misuse. To find out about prescription drug issues in your community, more information on what your community is already doing to address the problem, and what actions are still needed please contact Debbie New, Chair of Jackson County Community Health Action Team, at (580) 482-7308. Also check out the committee's Facebook page, Jackson County Substance Awareness Committee.