

The Pain Game

By Tracy E. Hopkins

COULD PRESCRIPTION
MEDICATION ABUSE BE
A PROBLEM FOR YOU
OR YOUR FAMILY?



After throwing her back out doing housework, Paula Matthews*, then 40, was diagnosed with two slipped discs and 13 misaligned vertebrae. Since then, Matthews has had three operations and several bouts with physical therapy. Her doctor also prescribed painkillers—325 milligrams of Oxycontin twice a day and 525 milligrams of Percocet twice a day. She has now been on pain meds for eight years.

"You don't want to admit it. But it's easy to become addicted, especially if you're in constant pain," says Matthews, who sometimes found herself taking extra Percocet to get through her days. "If I ran out [of pills] early, I would call my doctor and get more. Then when I lost my job and didn't have insurance, I didn't have the drug and went through withdrawal."

It was hard for Matthews to confess her addiction, especially since she was a mom and grandmother and not one of the celebrity cases in the

news. But her story is quite common. According to a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration study, the proportion of all substance abuse treatment admissions of those aged 12 and older involving abuse of prescription pain relievers rose by nearly 400 percent from 1998 to 2008.

Clare W. Kavin, administrative director of the Waismann Method, a rapid opiate detoxification treatment program, says the most common myth about prescription drugs is that they're safe.

"Many people believe that opiates (prescription painkillers) are safe because they are prescribed by a doctor or trusted medical professional," says Kavin.

"These drugs are very powerful and effective when taken in moderation and carefully monitored. However, when consumed over long periods of time, the body starts to require increased amounts in order to achieve the same effect. That's when we start to hear stories of individuals

Haute Topic

New condoms add style to substance.



Findings from the National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior revealed that condom use is highest among teenagers and African-Americans. And coincidentally, now that safe sex is in style, so are the condoms. In an effort to foster these positive sexual practices, "oooboutique" has transformed traditional condoms into fashionable accessories with sexy artwork, fun word play and depictions of suggestive poses and locations—all intended to stimulate conversation, adventure or ideas (oooboutique.com).

—Iman Folayan



Spaced Out

Why are more couples sleeping in separate bedrooms?

The Sleep in America poll by the National Sleep Foundation found that as a result of sleep problems such as sleep apnea or insomnia, nearly one in four couples sleep separately. They also reported that sleep disorders led to problems in the relationship and affected intimacy.

CONDOMS: OOOBOUTIQUE; WOMAN WITH PILLS: DIEGO VITO CERVO; COUPLE AT DINNER: O'DONNELL PHOTOGRAPH