

Drug poisoning growing cause of death

4 April 2008

A government report said poisoning is the second-leading cause of injury death in the United States after motor vehicle accidents.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said 32,691 people died of poisoning deaths in 2006, up 2 percent from the previous year. Motor vehicle traffic deaths accounted for 43,667 deaths that year.

Poisoning deaths were more likely to be classified as unintentional rather than as suicides or homicides, with 72 percent classified as unintentional in 2006. The CDC said unintentional drug poisonings, which are the largest component of poisoning deaths, are primarily related to drug overdose.

The report said doctors who prescribe narcotics such as methadone or oxycodone should be aware of the risks associated with the drugs that are contributing to these deaths.

"Whether the drugs are not prescribed correctly, are not taken according to the physician's directions, or are diverted from a patient to someone else cannot be ascertained, but all possibilities must be considered," the CDC said.

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APA citation: Drug poisoning growing cause of death (2008, April 4) retrieved 18 April 2021 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2008-04-drug-poisoning-death.html>

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