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Trends in Street Prices of Prescription Opioids in Florida: 2017-2021

The StreetRx surveillance system uses crowdsourcing to capture the street prices of prescription and illicit drug through its website, www.streetrx.com. Street price data in Florida from 2017 through the first half of 2021 were recently made available. Prices per milligram are shown in the chart. Prices for oxycodone sold informally are relatively stable over time, yet since 2020, prices have increased from \$1.30 to \$1.62.

Hydrocodone prices on the other hand saw a spike in 2019, followed by a decline, reaching a low of 83¢. The street price of morphine saw a high of 93¢ in 2018, and although prices declined, there was another peak in 2020 (69¢) followed by a decline to 44¢. These data provide an insight into local drug markets and offer guidance for community responses. For example, it's likely drug markets were affected during the pandemic, causing prices of morphine to rise; and potential dangers associated with fentanyl may be increasing the street value of oxycodone. StreetRx also collects data on motivations for obtaining diverted drugs. For hydrocodone, 91% of respondents said it was obtained to self-treat pain and 9% said it was to treat a medical condition other than pain. Data for morphine was mixed. Motivations included: to self-treat my pain (57%), to prevent or treat withdrawal (14%), for enjoyment or to get high (7%), to resell (7%), to treat a medical condition other than pain (7%), and to come down from another drug (7%). The primary motivations for obtaining oxycodone were to self-treat my pain (58%), to treat a medical condition other than pain (19%), for enjoyment or to get high (13%), to prevent or to treat withdrawal symptoms (7%), and to resell (3%). Attempting to self-treat pain, medical conditions, or even symptoms of opioid use disorder appear to be more prevalent than desires to get high. Thus, these data suggest a population who may benefit from formal medical treatment, or even medication assisted treatment for opioid use disorder.

Sources: StreetRx – Rocky Mountain Poison and Drug Safety. Data available by request and presented with permission. <https://www.radars.org/radars-system-programs/streetrx.html>

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