

# What not to do with prescription drugs

By ACSH Staff — August 16, 2013



[1]Pharmaceuticals are prescribed for individuals with individual health

problems. Because a drug will help one person with a particular condition doesn't necessarily mean it will help someone else; indeed, taking medicine meant for someone else might actually be dangerous. That should be clear to most people. Yet about ten percent of Americans admit to taking a prescription drug they haven't been prescribed, according to a *Reuters* poll described in the *Chicago Tribune* [2].

The poll was taken online, and about 6400 adults responded between July 24 and August 12. According to the poll, about 60 percent of those using others' drugs said they did so for pain relief, while another 20 percent took them to help them sleep or to relieve stress and anxiety. About 25 percent said they used them to get high. (not necessarily mutually exclusive)

A government survey cited in the *Tribune* article found that prescription drug misuse is an epidemic in the United States, second only to marijuana as a target of drug abuse or misuse. Over four billion prescriptions were written in the United States last year, a number which provides many opportunities for misuse.

ACSH's Dr. Gil Ross notes, Mixing an unauthorized drug with others a person might be taking could well lead to significant, often dangerous interactions especially when mixed with other substances of abuse, including alcohol. This is definitely not an intelligent move, and I fear that the actual number is far greater than the ten percent who admit to this practice. No wonder drug misadventures rank so highly on the list of causes of death in the U.S.

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## Links

[1] <http://acsh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/aspirin.jpg>

[2] <http://www.chicagotribune.com/sns-rt-usa-poll/drugs-reuters-ipsos-poll-repeat-20130815,0,2760655,full.story>