

Statewide database could cut down on prescription drug abuse

By Justin Herndon

Lee County - Getting prescription drugs from various doctors to feed an addiction -- or so-called 'doctor shopping' -- is a problem on the rise. That's the word from Lee county deputies and they say it's a problem that has to stop.

Major Jeff Taylor said, "Right now, it seems like the pharmaceuticals are one of our bigger problems resulting in addiction and death."

More than 120 people died from overdoses in the Southwest Florida counties of Lee, Glades and Hendry last year. That's a twenty percent increase from each of the past two years.

Major Taylor said, "I think society as a whole to solve all their problems, people take pills."

Deputies will soon expand a unit targeting prescription-abuse and the Florida department of law enforcement will add a member to the unit, as well.

Physicians like Doctor Dean Goldberg say prescribing pain relief is a catch-22.

Dr. Goldberg said, "If we're not providing that up front, then the expectation is to use more medications because you don't want to be without and that's where the problem is."

There's also the push for a statewide database that would track all of your prescriptions.

"It's not going to completely stop the problem but it will certainly cut down on those individuals that do doctor-shop and then those that will end up selling the pills on the black market," Dr. Goldberg said.

Last year, legislators said that database was too expensive, but doctors say the benefit could be priceless.

Dr. Goldberg said, "It also lets me catch the drug seeker who's using it for non-pain related entities because I see he's going to five different places and I've looked him over and worked him up and found he has no reason for pain."

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