

## Want Pills For Cheap? Come To South Fla.

### Out-Of-State Pill Shoppers Flock To Sunshine State

POSTED: 8:50 am EDT July 30, 2008

**OAKLAND PARK, Fla.** -- Two pain management clinics sit just three blocks from each other on Oakland Park Boulevard. Between them are a McDonald's and a motel called the Luck's Inn, where handfuls of people discreetly weave in and out. Shop for pills. Eat a burger. Find a room.

A group of men lingering outside the Pain Clinic at 501 W. Oakland Park Blvd. told Local 10's Janine Stanwood they were from Kentucky but visit Broward County often for pills. But they stopped short of explaining why.

A mother and daughter, also from Kentucky, walked from the clinic to the inn, each clutching a pillow and comforter. They said they needed pills but were turned away. They were looking for a room.

Neither would disclose which medications they needed, but said they came from Kentucky to South Florida to see the beach.

The two eventually negotiated a price for a room overlooking the parking lot.

### An Epidemic

Police believe there is an entire underground world operating at legitimate pain clinics all over the county.

"This is beyond epidemic proportions," Broward Sheriff's Office Sgt. Lisa McElhaney said. "This is a multibillion-dollar industry."

It's the industry of buying pills in Broward County and selling them on the streets in other states, McElhaney explained.

For example, one 80-milligram oxycodone pill can be purchased for \$15 to \$20 at a Broward County clinic. On the street in Kentucky, that same pill is worth \$80 to \$100.

McElhaney said typical "pill shoppers" are either street dealers or addicts who buy pills for themselves and sell them to feed their own addictions. The problem is pervasive, she said.

"As we attack the problem as law enforcement, it's a vicious cycle," McElhaney said. "They're in and out. As quickly as we put them in the system, they're back on the street doing the same thing."

### Tracking Them Down

The solution, according to some drug court judges at the Broward County courthouse, is to implement a state-run drug-tracking system. With that, they argue someone would not be able to purchase large quantities of prescription drugs because the state would soon notice patterns of abuse.

According to McElhaney, more than 20 states already have tracking systems, called Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs). The largest state in population without one is Florida.

Since pain clinics seem to be opening at rapid rates in Broward County, she explained, it is the place to be in this PDMP-free state for pill shoppers.

Broward County Judge Marcia Beach told Local 10 that legislation has been on the table to implement a PDMP in Florida, but nothing has ever passed. Although PDMPs in other states do not violate medical privacy laws, she said, opponents in Florida cite privacy issues as their main concerns.

Beach believes a tracking system would curb the supply of drugs and stop the cycle of abuse she sees from the bench in her drug court.

McElhaney agreed.

"The supply is here," she said. "The demand is there."

McElhaney explained that while the pills are legal, the consequences of abusing them are deadly everywhere: "The ultimate break in the cycle is when they overdose and die."

*Copyright 2008 by Local10.com. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.*

#### RELATED TO STORY



**Video: Pill Shopping Rampant In South Florida**