

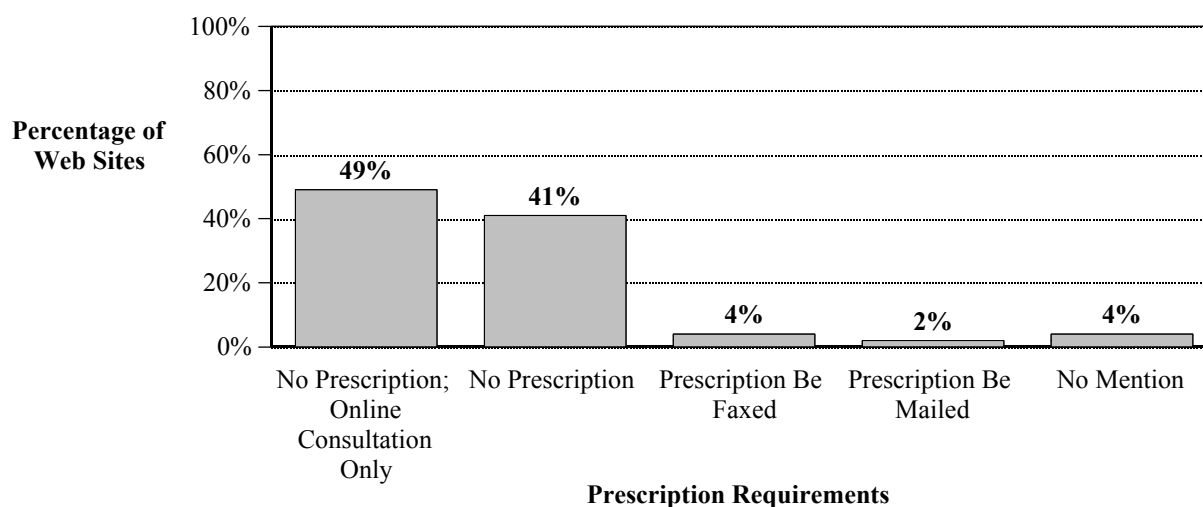
## A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

### *Prescription Not Required: Dangerous Controlled Prescription Drugs for Sale on the Internet*

Controlled prescription drugs\* are extensively available on the internet, with an overwhelming number of web sites not requiring a valid prescription, according to a one-week analysis of web sites offering Schedules II through V prescription drugs. Of the 157 sites that were found to sell such drugs, 141 sites (90%) did not require a valid prescription. No prescription at all was needed at 41% of the sites, while 49% of the sites required an "online consultation," where patients determined for themselves if their symptoms warranted the use of a particular drug. Faxing or mailing prescriptions were required in 4% and 2% of the sites, respectively. The remaining 4% of the sites made no mention of a prescription. Benzodiazepines (e.g. Xanax® and Valium®) were the drugs most frequently offered on the internet, followed by painkillers (e.g. fentanyl, hydrocodone, and oxycodone) and stimulants (e.g. Ritalin® and Adderall®). No sites included mechanisms to block children from purchasing prescription drugs. The authors acknowledge that prescription internet sales, offer "easier access to medications for individuals who need them for legitimate purposes," but suggest that such sales without prescription requirements are a "menace to our nation's health and a challenge for law enforcement" (p. 6). They conclude that, "The findings from this analysis clearly show that despite federal and state attempts to intervene there is no effective control of the Internet distribution of controlled, dangerous, addictive, prescription drugs" (p. 6).

#### **Percentage of Web Sites Selling Controlled Prescription Drugs, by Prescription Requirement, January 15-22, 2004 (N = 157)**



\*Controlled prescription drugs are those listed as Schedule II through V drugs under the federal Controlled Substance Act, meaning that they have accepted medical use but potential for abuse and dependency.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, "'You've Got Drugs!' Prescription Drug Pushers on the Internet," *A CASA White Paper*, February 2004. Available online at, <http://www.casacolumbia.org/pdshopprov/shop/item.asp?itemid=61>.

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