

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

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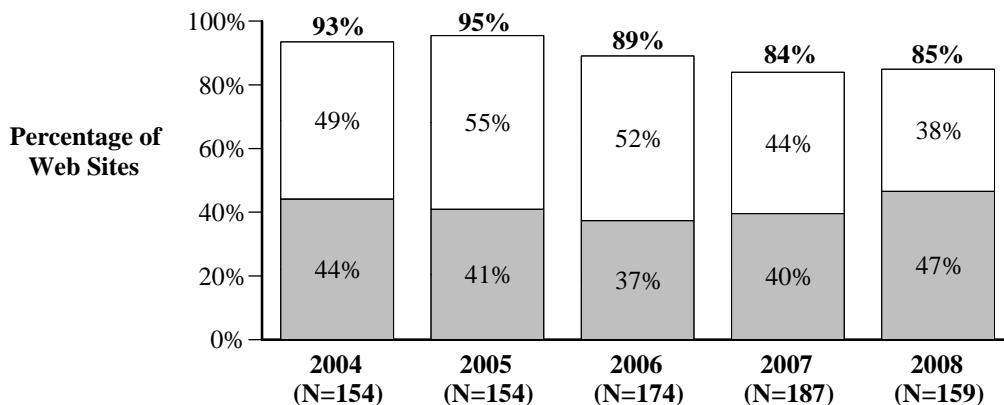
Prescription Drugs Continue to Be Widely Available on the Internet Without a Prescription

The majority of websites selling controlled prescription drugs¹ still do not require a prescription, according to a recent study from the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA). The study identified 159 internet sites selling such drugs during a one-week period in 2008, down from 187 the previous year. Of these sites, 85% did not require a valid prescription, either by explicitly stating that no prescription was needed/making no mention of a prescription (47%) or by offering an “online consultation” in lieu of a prescription² (38%). Only 24 sites (15%) required that a prescription be faxed or mailed or that the patient’s doctor be contacted for the prescription (data not shown). The authors recommend clarifying federal law to prohibit the internet sale or purchase of a controlled prescription drug without a prescription, requiring internet sites that advertise or sell controlled prescription drugs to be certified, encouraging internet search engines to block advertisements and sites from search results, and creating public service announcements that would appear automatically when conducting internet searches for prescription drugs.

Percentage of Web Sites Selling Prescription Drugs Without Requiring a Prescription

(During a One Week Period, 2004 to 2008)

■ No Prescription Needed (Explicitly Stated or No Mention) □ Online Consultation in Lieu of Prescription



¹Prescription opioids, depressants, and stimulants.

²An online consultation typically involves the consumer to fill out an online medical questionnaire, frequently for a consultation fee.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, “You’ve Got Drugs!” V: Prescription Drug Pushers on the Internet, July 2008. Available online at <http://www.casacolumbia.org>.