

The Unaddressed Aftermath of Surgery – Leftover Opioids – Highlights Importance of April 27 Drug Take Back Day

PHILADELPHIA, PA, UNITED STATES, April 22, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The opioid crisis has been the focus of countless headlines, health initiatives, and heartbreaking stories of loss and addiction over the past several years. While many measures have been taken to address over-prescription and misuse, a study by Philadelphia surgeons shines a light on an often-overlooked aspect of the epidemic: disposing of unused opioids post-surgery.

The findings emphasize a simple yet profound point: the opioid crisis is not just about the drugs used; it is also about the ones that are not used. The findings, emphasizing the importance of safe drug disposal, are timely as the next National Prescription Drug Take Back Day, sponsored by the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), is April 27, 2024.

Co-authored by Dr. Asif Ilyas, President of the [Rothman Opioid Foundation](#), a Professor of Orthopaedic Surgery at Thomas Jefferson University, and an Associate Dean of Clinical Research at the Drexel University College of Medical, alongside colleagues from the Rothman Orthopaedic Institute and the Sidney Kimmel Medical College at Thomas Jefferson University, the study titled "[How Patients Dispose of Unused Prescription Opioids](#): A Survey of over 300 Postoperative Patients" reveals surprising trends on how postoperative patients handle unused prescription opioids.

"Nearly every statistic from this study is a call to action. A staggering 94% of patients had leftover opioids post-surgery. While some might see this as a testament to the effectiveness of modern pain management techniques, it also underlines a massive surplus of potent drugs ripe for potential misuse or diversion," says Ilyas. "Among these, 68% reported disposing of their surplus medication, but the methods and locations of disposal varied greatly."

This brings us to a crucial revelation: most patients prefer to dispose of their opioids at local pharmacies. This indicates a level of trust and convenience associated with these establishments. However, are pharmacies effectively equipped or incentivized to handle this disposal? If patients' preferences are leaning this way, this avenue needs to be explored further and integrated into the wider strategy to combat opioid misuse.

"But it's not just about disposal. Alarming, 86% of patients stored their opioids in unlocked locations. This casual storage approach can turn homes into inadvertent hubs for drug diversion,

especially given that these powerful medications are often kept in easily accessible places like bathrooms and kitchens. This statistic should be particularly unsettling for anyone with teenagers or frequent guests," says Ilyas.

These findings underscore the importance of the DEA's National Prescription Drug Take Back Day on April 27, 2024.

"One or two days a year isn't enough. The conversation must be ongoing, emphasizing the dangers of misuse and the importance of secure storage and proper disposal. However, the DEA driven initiative to take back unused opioids is still very important and warrants amplification", says Ilyas.

He also recommends reconsidering the approach to post-surgery patient education on pain management at home. While efforts have been made to reduce pre-operative over-prescribing, Ilyas says, more education is needed on the importance of secure storage and proper disposal post-operatively.

"Our study offers a clarion call. While the larger battle against opioid misuse rages on, let's not overlook the simple steps that can be taken post-surgery to prevent these powerful drugs from becoming a public health hazard by employing safer storage strategies. It's time to ensure that the aftermath of surgical recovery doesn't inadvertently fuel the crisis we're trying so desperately to quell", says Ilyas.

The study titled "How Patients Dispose of Unused Prescription Opioids: A Survey of over 300 Postoperative Patients" can be found here:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9481200/>

About the Rothman Orthopaedic Institute Foundation for Opioid Research and Education.

The Rothman Orthopaedic Institute Foundation for Opioid Research & Education is a non-profit 501c3 organization dedicated to raising awareness of the risks and benefits of opioids, educating physicians and policymakers on safe opioid use, and supporting research and education aimed to advance innovative pain management strategies that can decrease opioid use. The Rothman Orthopaedic Institute Opioid Foundation supports and advances the highest quality research on opioids and alternative pain modalities to yield findings that can better inform patients, physicians, and the greater healthcare community in the most evidenced-based pain management strategies.

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