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Office of the Attorney General

UK Study Shows Prescription Drug Law's Effectiveness

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Since Kentucky's landmark prescription drug abuse legislation took effect in 2012, the Commonwealth has seen a significant decline in the number of prescriptions for the most commonly abused medications, doctor shopping has decreased by more than 50 percent, and more Kentuckians are seeking treatment for prescription medication addiction.

These findings, among others, are part of a yearlong study conducted by researchers at the University of Kentucky Institute for Pharmaceutical Outcomes and Policy and compiled in a report to the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS).

Gov. Steve Beshear joined Attorney General Jack Conway, lawmakers and health industry officials today to announce the report.

The study specifically researched and analyzed the impact of state law known as House Bill 1, which was passed in a special session by the 2012 General Assembly and signed into law by Gov. Beshear.

"House Bill 1 was a bipartisan effort designed to help us fight the epidemic of prescription drug abuse in Kentucky, and it's doing exactly that," said Gov. Beshear. "Since the law was enacted, not only have we seen a decline in doctor shopping and prescriptions for heavily abused medications, pill mills have closed and the provider community at large has become more educated and committed to using best practices for prescribing these commonly abused

medications."

Gov. Beshear said he and lawmakers are realistic and realize relapse is part of the disease of addiction, and "as a community, we must remain vigilant in our efforts to combat drug abuse to reduce its devastating toll on our families."

House Bill 1 included multiple strategies to prevent the abuse and diversion of prescription drugs; expanded Kentucky All Schedule Prescription Electronic Reporting (KASPER), Kentucky's prescription monitoring system; and required that pain management facilities be owned by a licensed physician.

Specifically, the bill mandated that practitioners and pharmacists register with the KASPER system in an effort to reduce the number of patients receiving similar prescriptions from multiple doctors.

According to the study, since House Bill 1 was implemented:

- More individuals are seeking office-based addiction treatment.
- The number of patients "doctor shopping" declined by 52 percent.
- 24 non-physician-owned pain management facilities have ceased operation.
- The number of opioid prescriptions to doctor-shopping individuals dropped by 54 percent.
- 5 million KASPER reports were requested in 2014.
- Each weekday, providers request more than 20,000 KASPER reports.
- For the first time in six years, Kentucky overdose deaths declined in 2013.

"The results of this study are proof of what can happen when we put people above politics," Attorney General

Jack Conway said. “Gov. Beshear, Senate President Stivers, House Speaker Stumbo and I worked across party lines to craft and pass a piece of legislation that is saving lives in Kentucky. For the first time in recent memory, the numbers are moving in the right direction, and we’re a better state for taking this action that has become a national model.”

“House Bill 1 was an example of the legislative process creating an effective and practical solution to a real problem,” Senate President Robert Stivers, of Manchester, said. “But the war on drugs is ever-evolving. It is important that we as lawmakers act as quickly as we can to identify and prevent new drugs from spreading in our communities.”

“This report validates the efforts we have made to reverse an epidemic that is killing or crippling tens of thousands of our citizens and is hurting us all in ways large and small,” said House Speaker Greg Stumbo, who sponsored House Bill 1 in 2012. “As House Speaker, and during my time as Attorney General, I have re-dedicated myself to making sure the state does all it can to put the dealers and rogue doctors behind bars and to get addicts the treatment they need to escape their deadly cycle. Our work has been hailed as a national model, but as I have said many times, drug abuse is an ever-changing battlefield. We can never afford to let our guard down.”

House Bill 1 requires that when a complaint is received about inappropriate controlled substance prescribing, the Attorney General, Kentucky State Police, CHFS and the appropriate licensure board collaborate and share information for administrative and law enforcement purposes.

From House Bill 1’s passage in July 2012 to March 2015, the Kentucky Board of Medical Licensure took 196 controlled substance prescribing disciplinary actions against 142 physicians, ranging from emergency orders of suspension or restriction, to license suspensions or surrenders and revocations. The Board also has the ability to restrict a physician’s ability to prescribe controlled substances through the use of an Agreed Order.

“The Board has remained diligent in carrying out the provisions of HB1 and has been pleased with the results of the legislation and the regulations that were implemented as a result,” said Mike Rodman, executive director of the Kentucky Board of Medical Licensure. “Due to the legislation, physicians throughout Kentucky are utilizing the KASPER system appropriately to monitor their patients and make informed decisions on their prescribing practices. In addition, the education requirements mandated by HB1 have provided physicians with important educational opportunities to learn about pain management, addiction and the KASPER program.”

Gov. Beshear said that a recent report by the Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy showing that Kentucky overdose deaths increased in 2014, after leveling off in 2013, indicates the persistent challenge of reining in substance use and abuse.

“One overdose death is one too many, and the information from this 2014 report is further proof of our ongoing challenges to help put those Kentuckians facing addiction back on their feet,” Gov. Beshear said. “But the provisions in House Bill 1 are working. We further enhanced Kentucky’s fight against this scourge in the 2015 legislative session with the passage of Senate Bill 192, our historic anti-heroin legislation.”

Gov. Beshear said all officials must continue to educate the public on the dangers of drug use and abuse, and continue to commit appropriate resources to the strategies the state has taken to reduce the devastating toll of addiction on families and communities.

The study’s executive summary and full report are available in the KASPER Studies and Surveys section of the KASPER public website: www.chfs.ky.gov/KASPER (<http://www.chfs.ky.gov/KASPER>).

For more information about the Institute for Pharmaceutical Outcomes and Policy in the UK College of Pharmacy, visit <http://pharmacy.mc.uky.edu/ipop/> (<http://pharmacy.mc.uky.edu/ipop/>).

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