

# OPIOIDS AND THE WORKPLACE

**MORE THAN 53,000 U.S. OPIOID DEATHS** occurred in 2016, a 200% increase since 2000.<sup>1</sup>

**OPIOID PRESCRIPTIONS** have been linked to higher workers' compensation cost claims, more lost time from the workplace, and greater duration of paid short-term disability.<sup>3</sup>

**IN THE U.S.,** nonmedical use of prescription opioids cost employers \$42 billion attributable to lost productivity.<sup>5</sup>

**THE EFFECTS OF OPIOIDS** may include sedation, reduced attention, short term memory, reaction time, and coordination; affecting safety sensitive functions such as driving, equipment operation, critical monitoring, and judgement.<sup>8</sup>

**EMPLOYER SUPPORTED AND MONITORED TREATMENT** yields better sustained recovery rates.<sup>10</sup>

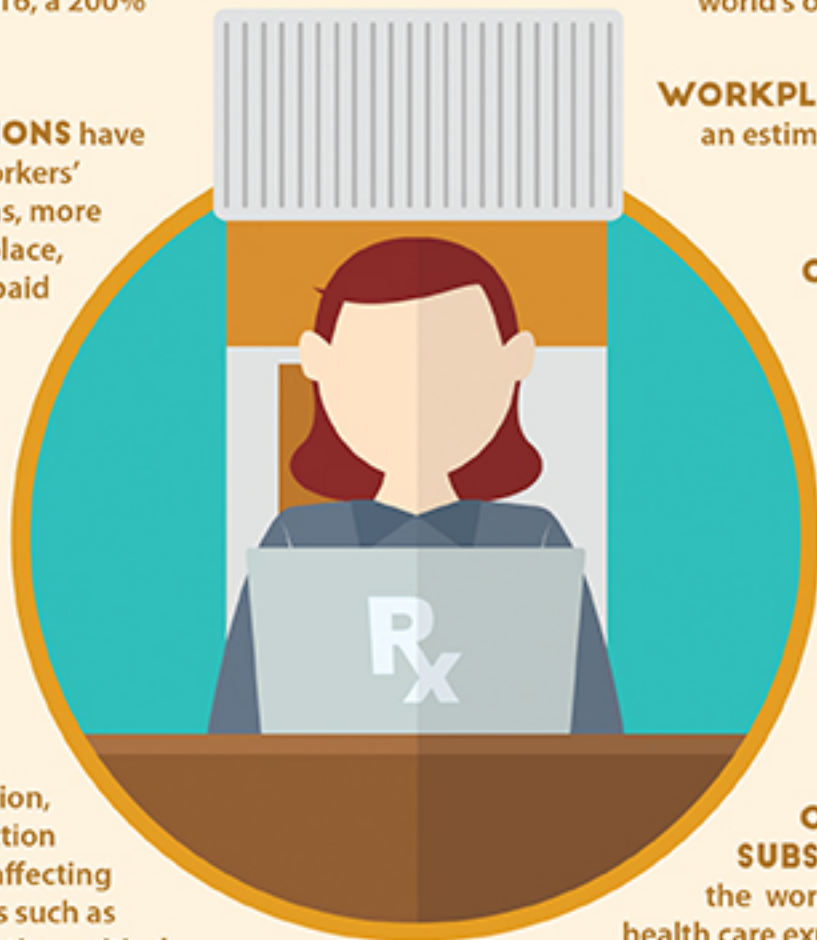
**THE U.S. CONSUMES** at least 75% of the world's opioid prescription drugs.<sup>2</sup>

**WORKPLACE INSURERS** spend an estimated \$1.4 billion annually on opioids.<sup>4</sup>

**OVER 69%** of all current illegal drug users work.<sup>6</sup>

**WORKERS WHO RECEIVED HIGH DOSES** of opioid painkillers to treat injuries like back strain stayed out of work three times longer than those with similar injuries who took lower doses.<sup>7</sup>

**OPIOIDS AND OTHER SUBSTANCE ABUSE** affects the workplace through increased health care expenses, and absenteeism; reductions in productivity and performance; additional workers' compensation and disability claims; and safety concerns.<sup>9</sup>



**National Drug-Free  
Workplace Alliance**



**Drug Free  
AMERICA  
Foundation, Inc.**

<sup>1</sup> Hedegaard, H. et al. "National Center for Health Statistics." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 21 Dec. 2017, [www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db294.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db294.htm). <sup>2</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2011. <sup>3</sup> Swedlow, A., Gardner, L., Ireland, J., Genovese, E. Pain Management and the Use of Opioids in the Treatment of Back Conditions in the California Workers' Compensation System. Report to the Industry. CWCI, June 2008. <sup>4</sup> Meier, B. (2012, June 2). Pain pills add cost and delays to job injuries. New York Times. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/03/health/painkillers-add-costs-and-delays-to-workplace-injuries.html>. Accessed February 13, 2018. <sup>5</sup> Hansen, R.N., et al. "Economic Costs of Nonmedical Use of Prescription Opioids." The Clinical Journal of Pain, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 2011, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21178601](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21178601). <sup>6</sup> SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. "Results from the 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings." Sept. 2014, [www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUHresultsPDFWHHTML2013/Web/NSDUHresults2013.htm](http://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUHresultsPDFWHHTML2013/Web/NSDUHresults2013.htm). <sup>7</sup> Meier, B. (2012, June 2). Pain pills add cost and delays to job injuries. New York Times. <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/03/health/painkillers-add-costs-and-delays-to-workplace-injuries.html>. Accessed February 13, 2018. <sup>8</sup> Stewart-Patterson, C. "Can My Patient Safely Drive on Long-Term Daily Opioid Medication?" This Changed My Practice (UBC CPD), The University of British Columbia Faculty of Medicine, 25 Nov. 2014, [thischangedmypractice.com/drive-on-opioid-medication/](http://thischangedmypractice.com/drive-on-opioid-medication/). <sup>9</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 14 short employer cost savings briefs. Available at: <http://ncadistore.samhsa.gov/catalog/productDetails.aspx?ProductID=17943>. Accessed January 26, 2009. <sup>10</sup> Weisner, C. et al. "Substance Use, Symptom, and Employment Outcomes of Persons with a Workplace Mandate for Chemical Dependency Treatment." Pub Med, U.S. National Library of Medicine, NIH, HRIS, May 2009, [www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19411353](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19411353).