MEDICAL EXAMINER SAYS MORE TRAVIS COUNTY RESIDENTS ARE DYING FROM MEDICATION OVERDOSES THAN FROM ILLICIT DRUG ABUSE

The Travis County Medical Examiner’s Office is available to discuss the emerging problem of Travis County residents abusing certain prescription medications, and also combining these medications with alcohol, leading to a deadly outcome.

According to the Travis County Medical Examiner, more Travis County residents died from prescription medication overdoses in 2010 than from illicit drug abuse, and the trend continues into early 2011.

Of particular concern is a deadly combination of prescription pain killers, benzodiazepines (nerve pills), and prescription muscle relaxants, all of which, in any combination, can slow down breathing, particularly when taken in excessive amounts and/or with alcohol. This deadly combination of medications was present in more than half (57%) of all drug-related deaths investigated in 2010. In nearly one-third of these cases, the medications were combined with alcohol.

Of the pain medications detected the most frequent was Hydrocodone, followed by Methadone, Oxycodone and Fentanyl. The most frequently detected benzodiazepines were Alprazolam (Xanax), followed by Clonazepam (Klonopin) and Diazepam (Valium). The muscle relaxant was mainly Carisoprodol (Soma).

The medical examiner’s office urges the public to take medications only as prescribed, do not mix medications with alcohol and remember these deaths are preventable!

The contact for this release is Deputy Chief Medical Examiner Satish Chundru at 512-854-9599.###

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