

## **Recognizing The Drug Abuser**

(adapted from the DEA website, June 2003)

Telling the difference between a legitimate patient and a drug abuser isn't easy. The drug-seeking individual may be unfamiliar to you. They could be a person who claims to be from out-of-town and has lost or forgotten a prescription of medication. Or the drug seeker may actually be familiar to you such as another practitioner, co-worker, friend or relative. Drug abusers or "doctor-shoppers" often possess similar traits. Recognizing these characteristics is the first step to identifying the drug-seeking patient who may be attempting to manipulate you in order to obtain desired medications.

### **Common Characteristics of the Drug Abuser:**

- Unusual behavior in the waiting room;
- Assertive personality, often demanding immediate action;
- Unusual appearance - extremes of either slovenliness or being over-dressed;
- May show unusual knowledge of controlled substances and/or gives medical history with textbook symptoms **OR** gives evasive or vague answers to questions regarding medical history;
- Reluctant or unwilling to provide reference information. Usually has no regular doctor and often no health insurance;
- Will often request a specific controlled drug and is reluctant to try a different drug;
- Generally has no interest in diagnosis - fails to keep appointments for further diagnostic tests or refuses to see another practitioner for consultation and
- May exhibit mood disturbances, suicidal thoughts, lack of impulse control, thought disorders, and/or sexual dysfunction

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### **The Dentist's Well Being Committee**

**A program for assisting dentists and their families with personal problems.**

**800/341-9704**

### ◆◆ Purpose◆◆

The Committee assists dentists and their families who may be experiencing personal problems. The Committee has helped many dentists over the years with problems such as stress, drug dependence, alcoholism, depression, medical problems, infectious diseases, neurological disorders and other illnesses that cause impairment.

### ◆◆ Confidentiality◆◆

The Committee provides a confidential, non-disciplinary avenue for dentists to seek appropriate help for problems. Referrals are completely confidential. Any dentist who seeks help through the Committee can be assured that their information will be held in the strictest confidence.