



Report Highlights

Oversight of the Prescription Monitoring Program

Louisiana Board of Pharmacy

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Why We Conducted This Audit

We conducted this audit because the dispensing of addictive medications such as opioids and sedatives, as well as overdose deaths from prescription drugs, has increased in recent years. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), nearly 1,000 people died in Louisiana during 2016 due to drug overdoses, an increase of 14.7% from 2015.

We evaluated whether the Louisiana Board of Pharmacy (LABP) provided effective oversight of Louisiana's Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) to ensure compliance with the PMP Act. This act requires LABP to establish and maintain an electronic system for the monitoring of controlled substances and drugs of concern (e.g., opioids and ADHD medications) dispensed in the state.

What We Found

Overall, we found that while LABP maintains and reviews the PMP database as required by state law and has implemented many recommended best practices, it cannot ensure that the database is complete and accurate because of the following issues:

- LABP needs a more comprehensive process to ensure that the PMP contains complete prescription information.** We found that 161 (5.0%) of 3,222 Workers' Compensation prescriptions and 14,467 (3.0%) of 484,173 Medicaid prescriptions for hydrocodone and oxycodone dispensed during calendar year 2016 were missing from the PMP. While the percentages are not high, they represent 14,628 missing hydrocodone and oxycodone prescriptions in a one-year period.
- While LABP has the authority to penalize pharmacies that do not correct PMP submission errors in a timely manner, it does not have a process to identify noncompliant pharmacies on a regular basis.** We identified more than 25,500 prescriptions dispensed during calendar year 2016 with outstanding errors that had not been released into Louisiana's PMP as of November 2017.

In addition, LABP should expand its review of PMP data to proactively identify doctors, pharmacists, and patients with questionable activity related to controlled substances. We identified potential instances of "doctor shopping," prescriptions for excessive quantities of controlled substances, and use of forged and expired prescriptions.

Top Five Prescriptions in Louisiana PMP by Generic Name - Calendar Year 2017			
Drug Generic Name	Drug Type	Number of Prescriptions	Percent of Total
Hydrocodone/Acetaminophen	Opioid	2,187,230	18.3%
Alprazolam	Benzodiazepine	1,044,946	8.8%
Dextroamphetamine	Amphetamine	991,238	8.3%
Tramadol	Opioid	941,210	7.9%
Oxycodone/Acetaminophen	Opioid	692,401	5.8%
Other Controlled Substances		6,077,294	50.9%
Total Prescriptions		11,934,319	100%
Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using information from LABP's presentation to the PMP Advisory Council on January 10, 2018.			

View the full report, including management's response, at www.la.gov.