

Lock your meds

Dear Denise:

When coming into Elkin on 268 I see a billboard, big and black, that says "Lock Your Meds". I'm not sure I get the implications or the point. It seems to me rather inconvenient and not relevant for the majority of us to consider doing this. So I guess my question is "Why"?

Don

Dear Don:

You are probably aware of the problems related to the opioid epidemic all over the the US including here in Surry County. It all started back about 20 plus years ago when there was an added vital sign, pain, that doctors had to start checking with their patients. Also, at the time, there were new pain killers coming out presented as limited to no possibility of addiction and were a "miracle" when it came to having to deal with pain. Doctors were learning about these new medications and were convinced that they were bad doctors if their patients suffered from pain, because with these great new remedies no one should suffer from pain. Unfortunately, this way of thinking still exists somewhat today.

If you watch tv at all every other commercial is about a new drug to ask your doctor about. Almost everyone takes pills for everything. This has lead to bottles of pills on everyone's kitchen counters, bathroom medicine cabinets, bedside tables, etc.

We all know that just about anything can be abused or misused. The availability and ease of access to these drugs that turned out to be quite addictive and also abused and misused has resulted in the current opioid epidemic.

There are many ways people become addicted to these opioids but one of the predominant ways is through a doctor. Young people often have their wisdom teeth removed and are sent home with pills. They don't necessarily become addicted to them but they do like the way they feel and some want to use more to replicate the feeling. It is not only young people who fall into this trap. Because of chronic pain, necessary surgeries, car accidents, etc, people are prescribed these pills, sometimes in bulk, every day.

The idea behind "lock your meds" is to take away this easy access. You might wonder why you might need to do this in your home when you are sure no one would be stealing your pills and locking them up sure would be inconvenient. We just don't know these days who has been willingly or accidentally captured by this misuse and abuse but we do know that this opioid addiction touches almost everyone in some way.

Did you know that sometimes kids bring a variety of accessible pills to parties these days and they take a few at a time not even knowing what they are? Whatever is just hanging around at home. Did you ever have someone visiting your home or maybe someone come to work in your home who needed to use your bathroom? Did you know that it is common for people to attend open houses and while one keeps the realtor busy the other goes through the bathroom medicine cabinets, checks bedside tables, and peruses the shelves for whatever pills they can grab?

I know this all sounds removed from your world and environment, but we know in Surry County this is a major problem so its got to be happening somewhere where people least expect it.

One way we can be proactive is by taking away opportunity and accessibility. Locking your meds is a start. The opioid epidemic does not stop at pills here in Surry County. But, it is often the way it begins. People often move on to using heroin which is less expensive and the same high. Perhaps if we can prevent the availability of excessive use and abuse of pills, there will be less people moving on to heroin.

Please lock your meds and do your part at helping to make Surry County more healthy. For more information on this topic check out www.lockyourmeds.com. I hope this answers your question.

Regards,

Denise Krochta

You can send your questions to Denise at krochta@co.surry.nc.us or to Denise Krochta, Opioid Response, PO box 1467, Dobson, NC 27017