

## **New York AG seeks to ramp up fight against prescription drug abuse**

*Physicians and pharmacists would be required to submit information and consult an online database before dispensing narcotics under a new proposal. New York Attorney General Eric T. Schneidermann is hoping to enhance the state's prescription drug monitoring program.* With narcotics abuse one of the most oft-cited concerns in the workers' comp system, some stakeholders have sought help from state regulators. Schneidermann's proposal aims to combat prescription drug abuse.

The problem has been growing in recent years. Schneidermann's office reports the use of oxycodone prescriptions rose 66 percent in New York City alone from 2007 to 2009. Another opioid, Opana ER, has increased in use in Nassau County, N.Y., since the manufacturer of OxyContin altered its formula to prevent abuse.

The proposed Internet System for Tracking Over Prescribing Act, or I-STOP, would create an online database to provide real-time, centralized information on certain controlled substances. Health care practitioners and pharmacists would be required to do the following:

- Report specific information when Schedule II, III, IV and V controlled substances are prescribed and dispensed. Schedule II substances include oxycodone and morphine; Schedule III includes vicodin; Schedule IV includes Xanax and Klonopin; and Schedule V includes pyrovalerone.
- Consult the database before prescribing and dispensing a Schedule II, III, IV or V drug.
- Complete continuing education programs on the proper uses of the substance reporting system.

Physicians will be able to ensure a prescription is medically necessary and that the patient is not an addict or habitual user. Pharmacists will be able to ensure the prescription presented matches the data reported by a practitioner to the I-STOP database.

The legislation would prohibit the disclosure of all the data collected in the online database unless authorized by law. Officials say the proposal will help crack down on doctor shopping, where patients visit several physicians and pharmacies for prescription drugs.

"With real-time information, physicians and pharmacists will be able to track potential abuses, treat addiction, and stop those who enable and profit off of the illegitimate use of prescribed drugs," according to a statement from Schneidermann's office.

Forty-three states have prescription drug monitoring programs in place. There is a proposal in Congress to create a national prescription drug database.