



The three largest wholesale drug distributors – McKesson, AmerisourceBergen and Cardinal Health – account for more than 80 percent of the wholesale opioid distribution business in the United States. The companies have combined revenues of \$400 billion and profits in the billions of dollars:

Wholesale Drug Distributors:

Facts:

- Wholesale distributors have a duty under the federal Controlled Substances Act, 21 U.S.C. Sec. 823, 21 CFR 1301.74, to monitor, detect, investigate refuse and report suspicious orders of prescription opiates – orders of unusual size, orders deviating substantially from a normal pattern and orders of unusual frequency.
- Distributors that supply controlled substances to pharmacies must “design and operate a system to disclose to the [distributor] suspicious orders of controlled substances” and in turn disclose those suspicious orders to the Drug Enforcement Administration. The system is intended to reduce the widespread diversion of these drugs out of legitimate channels into the illicit market.

Opioids

Facts:

- Opioids are a class of drugs that include the prescription pain relievers oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, morphine, fentanyl and others, as well as the illegal drug heroin.
- The opioid prescription market totaled \$13 billion in 2015 and is projected to grow to \$17.7 billion by 2021, according to a report by Global Business Intelligence.

Use and Abuse:

Facts:

- On an average day in the United States, more than 650,000 opioid prescriptions are dispensed, according to IMS Health’s National Prescription Audit.
- In 2015, 12.5 million people misused prescription opioids, according to the 2015 National Survey on Drug Use and Health.
- 33,091 people died in 2015 from overdosing on opioids, according to the Centers for Disease Control – nearly half of those (15,281) were attributed to overdosing on commonly prescribed opioids.
- Drug overdose is the leading cause of death for people under the age of 50.