Drug Sales Go Up As Pseudoephedrine Is Being Pulled

by K_Guice

In an ongoing battle against methamphetamine use, July 1 a state law will go into effect making all products containing pseudoephedrine, ephedrine and phenylpropanolamine available only by prescription.

Kerri Nelson, Pharmacist Home Care I.V. of Bend

Pharmacists are reporting that their customers are not happy. â€œSome people are upset because they either donâ€™t want to have to get a prescription for their current over-the-counter allergy medication or try the reformulated products with phenylephrine,â€• said Kerri Nelson, a pharmacist with Home Care I.V. of Bend.

Phenylephrine is the drug being used in place of pseudoephedrine. â€œSome say it works great, others say it doesnâ€™t work for them at all,â€• she added.

At the heart of the matter is methamphetamines; some of the most widely abused controlled substances in Oregon, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). â€œPseudoephedrine is one of the main ingredients required to make methamphetamines,â€• said Capt. Tim Edwards of the Deschutes County Sheriff's Office.

He said this is a direct effort at shutting down meth labs across the state. â€œWe have already seen a dramatic reduction in the past three years and attribute that to the new methamphetamine precursor legislation,â€• Capt. Edwards said.

In fact, he says thanks to laws like pseudoephedrine being kept behind the counter; the county really canâ€™t go much further down. â€œWe havenâ€™t had any meth labs in our area this year. We had one the year before, five the year before that and 22 a year before that.â€•

â€œThe rest of the state is seeing bigger reductions and this new law will likely further reduce it in metropolitan areas,â€• Capt. Edwards said.

Despite the good news of the effectiveness of past legislation, people still are far from happy about the new law. â€œIt is going to be difficult for some people because they canâ€™t get by on phenylephrine,â€• Nelson said.

This is not the first time. She said customers complained when pharmacies began keeping pseudoephedrine behind the counter. â€œWhen people started having to sign a log they got upset,â€• Nelson recalled. â€œAnytime you make something more difficult people are going to be unhappy.â€•

While some people are upset by the new laws, others have mixed feelings. â€œI can imagine if you donâ€™t have the money to go see a doctor to get a prescription it would be frustrating,â€• said 79-year-old Jo Lunsford. â€œAt the same time Iâ€™d like to keep it out of the hands of the people using it inappropriately.â€•

According to information from the DEA, two varieties are generally encountered in Oregon. There are those produced locally by area violators, which has been greatly reduced. The second variety is Mexican

methamphetamine, which is either manufactured locally or obtained from sources in Mexico, California and other Southwest Border states.

Of the two types, Mexican methamphetamine continues to flood the market. Methamphetamines are available in multi-pound amounts throughout western Oregon, and smaller quantities are available in Eastern Oregon.

Capt. Edwards says while this new law will help to a degree, it isnâ€™t the final answer. â€œJust because the meth labs are gone doesnâ€™t mean we have rid the area of the problem,â€• he said. â€œOur biggest meth problem is from California and Mexico. Dealers are still bringing it into the area.â€•

Nelson says if it helps impact the problem at all she is in support of it. â€œI think it is a good law even if it only helps deter one person from using meth,â€• she said.

â€œThe other thing is, if you have a good rapport with your doctor you can call and ask your physician to call in a prescription,â€• Nelson said. However, she says that depends on how often a person goes to the doctor and the relationship the two have.

In the meantime, many stores in Central Oregon are seeing an increase in cold and allergy medicine sales. Some consumers are choosing to stock up rather than waiting until they get sick.

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