Fuller 1

India Fuller

Humanities- ½

3 June 2014

**What’s in Your Medicine Cabinet?**

Cough syrup is a liquid that is taken to suppress or expectorate a cough. However, a high percentage of teens today use cough syrup to get high (Griffin). Dextromethorphan (DXM) is the drug in cough syrup that makes teens high. DXM is an "over-the-counter" drug which means young adults can walk into a pharmacy and buy it off of the shelf. Because cough syrup is used to treat colds, teens do not think it could be dangerous. Therefore, teens need to be more educated about the negative effects of abusing cough syrup.

Teens abuse cough syrup for many different reasons, it is easily accessible and because they do not see it as a dangerous substance. Some teens use cough syrup simply to get high. For example, “This is an exciting time of the year for high school seniors and their families; classes are over and it’s time to celebrate with proms, graduation parties, and other festivities. The downside of all this revelry is the surge in the underage drinking and other risky activities that often accompany this otherwise happy season” (“Detroit Jewish News”). This implies that some teens use drugs just to try them and because they have accomplished something, they use it to celebrate, whether it is under peer pressure or on their own. Teens should not turn to cough medicine to have a good time or to absent themselves from the world. However, this is not the only example that shows teen ignorance. For instance, “Getting access to the dangerous drug is often as easy as walking into the local drugstore with a few dollars or raiding the family medicine cabinet. And because it’s found in over-the-counter medicines, many teens naively assume that DXM can’t be dangerous” (“Cough and Cold”). This shows that getting over the

Fuller 2

counter medicine is a more convenient method for getting high. When teens may not have access to what they want to use to get high, they may turn to cough syrup as a backup plan because it can be found in everyone’s medicine cabinet. Although, it is not recommended to drink more than the suggested dose, teens are guzzling cough syrup to get high. There are of course many different reasons why a teen uses cough syrup to get high, but these are the most common.

Abusing cough syrup has many dangerous effects, not only on teens but on society as well. People who abuse cough medicine are at a higher risk of having breathing problems and malfunctions of the heart. For example, “At high does, or if mixed with other depressants or alcohol, Purple Drank can lead to a slowed respiratory system and potential cardiac arrest. Also, due to its impairment of motor functions, people abusing Purple Drank are at a very high risk for driving accidents/fatalities” (“Purple Drank, Sippin”). This proves that abusing cough syrup has many different dangers to it. One result of abusing cough medicine is getting addicted which leads to withdrawals of the drug. Just in the same way there are many more examples of the effect cough syrup abuse has on teens. For example, “At high doses, DXM can cause: impaired vision, sweating and fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, impaired judgment and mental functions, memory loss, hallucinations, and coma” (Griffin). Teens put their body at risk for physical implications. These implications can ruin their day to day lives. Society and teens are at risk for getting harmed by the dangerous effects of cough syrup.

There are some solutions to help decrease drug abuse rate in America. One solution is to check the medicine cabinets and liquor bottles frequently. For example, “Start by cleaning out your medicine cabinet and keeping an eye out on how much medicine is in each bottle or

Fuller 3

package. Keep prescription and OTC medicines such as cough medicine away from your children’s reach and sight. Some parents decide to lock up their medicine cabinets like they do their liquor cabinets. But the most important thing is to talk with your kids” (Griffin). This quote suggests that parents should have a conversation with their teen children about the dangers of abusing cough medicine. Therefore communication between teens and their parents is one of the main solutions in reducing cough syrup abuse in America. However, this is not the only example of how to alleviate cough syrup abuse. For instance, “By talking about the risks of DXM abuse with your teens, you can help them stay in that healthy majority” (Griffin). When an adult has a conversation with their teens about cough syrup abuse they are less likely to try the drug because of its dangerous effects. Teens and young adults do not understand that abusing cough can have a huge impact on their lives. These are just some ways people can alleviate cough syrup abuse in America, there are many more ways to help stop abusing cough syrup.

Teens need to be more educated on the abuse of cough syrup. It is highly suggested that adults should have a conversation with their children and tell them the dangers of taking more than the suggested dose of cough syrup. Also, frequently check the liquor cabinets and medicine cabinets and mark how much is in there. People need to be more careful and aware about their cough medicine use and not abuse it.