

Hospital Visits

The latest data on drug abuse-related hospital emergency department (ED) visits are findings from the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN), based on data for the second half of 2003. DAWN is a public health surveillance system that monitors drug-related ED visits for select metropolitan areas and provides estimates for the Nation. It is a product of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. For the reporting period, 260 out of 518 sampled hospitals submitted usable data to DAWN. On average, each DAWN member hospital submitted 260 DAWN cases, or about 43 per month.

The findings below are summarized as a courtesy by NIDA, for those interested in drug-related hospital emergency data. For more detailed findings, please visit oas.samhsa.gov.

Highlights from the 2003 Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN)*————

For the third and fourth quarters of 2003, DAWN estimates 627,923 drug-related ED visits nationwide. Overall, drug-related ED visits averaged 1.7 drugs per visit, including illicit drugs and inhalants,

alcohol, prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) pharmaceuticals, dietary supplements, and nonpharmaceutical inhalants.

SAMHSA estimates 305,731 drug-related ED visits involved alcohol or a major illicit drug; this is nearly half (49 percent) of all drug-related ED visits.

- Cocaine was involved in 125,921 ED visits, or 20 percent of all drug-related ED visits.
- Marijuana was involved in 79,663, or nearly 13 percent, of all drug-related ED visits.
- Heroin was involved in 47,604, or nearly 8 percent, of all drug-related ED visits.
- Stimulants, including amphetamines and methamphetamine, were involved in 42,538, or nearly 7 percent of all drug-related ED visits.
- Unspecified opiates, some of which may be heroin, occurred in 24,623, or nearly 4 percent, of all drug-related ED visits.

The following illicit drugs were mentioned less frequently than those above:

- PCP was involved in 4,581 of all drug-related ED visits.
- MDMA (Ecstasy) was involved in 2,221 visits.

- Nonpharmaceutical inhalants were involved in 1,681.
- GHB was involved in 990.
- Miscellaneous hallucinogens were involved in 684.
- LSD was involved in 656.
- Ketamine was involved in 73.

DAWN estimates 332,046 visits related to “drug misuse or abuse” in quarters three and four of 2003. More than half (54 percent) of these visits involved multiple drugs, and alcohol or an illicit drug was involved in nearly two-thirds (65 percent).

The specific drugs most commonly associated with drug misuse- or abuse-related ED visits included:

- Cocaine — 28 percent of visits
- Alcohol — 26 percent
- Marijuana — 20 percent
- Heroin — 10 percent
- Major stimulants (amphetamines/methamphetamine) — 10 percent
- Benzodiazepines (anti-anxiety medications), nonmedical use — 17 percent
- Opiates/opioid analgesics (pain relievers) — 17 percent

*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies. *Drug Abuse Warning Network 2003: Interim National Estimates of Drug-Related Emergency Department Visits*. December 2004.

Note: The latest DAWN data is estimated to be available in late spring, 2008; this fact sheet will be updated at that time.