

**Prescription Drug Abuse  
Florida's Health Crisis**



**Florida Office of Drug Control  
Bruce D. Grant**

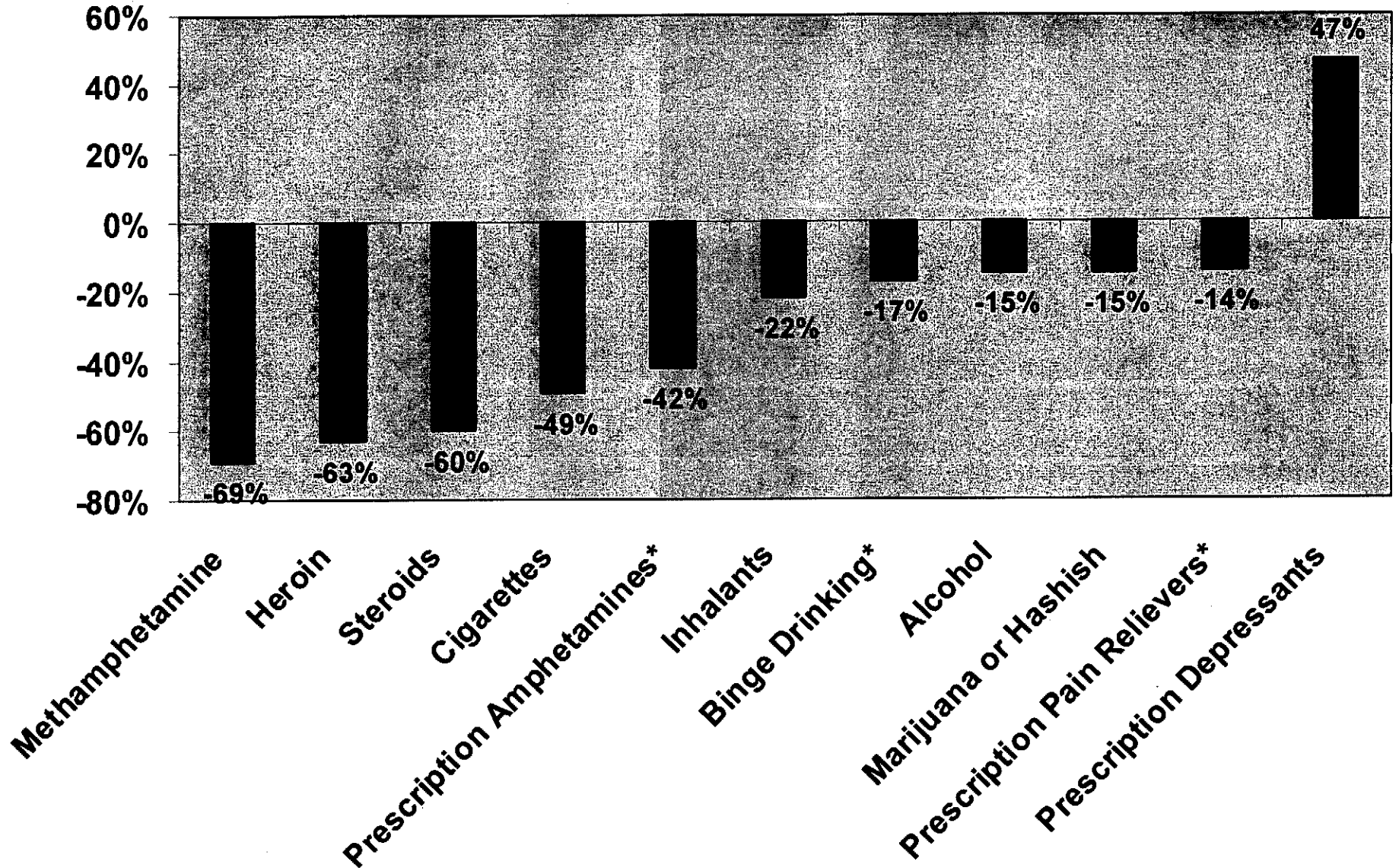
# Overview

- The intent of this brief is to provide an overview of the extent of the problem of prescription drug diversion in Florida.
- Prescription drug diversion is *NOT* just a concern for Broward or south Florida, but is the most wide-ranging public health problem confronting Floridians today.
- Florida has become the epicenter for the availability and abuse of controlled prescription drugs.

# Extent of the Problem

- Between 2003 and 2009, the number of deaths caused by at least one prescription drug more than doubled.
- Among young people ages 12-17, prescription drugs have become the second most abused illegal drug, behind marijuana.

## Percentage Change in Past 30-Day Use Among Middle and High School Students (2000-2009)



## **Extent of the Problem (cont.)**

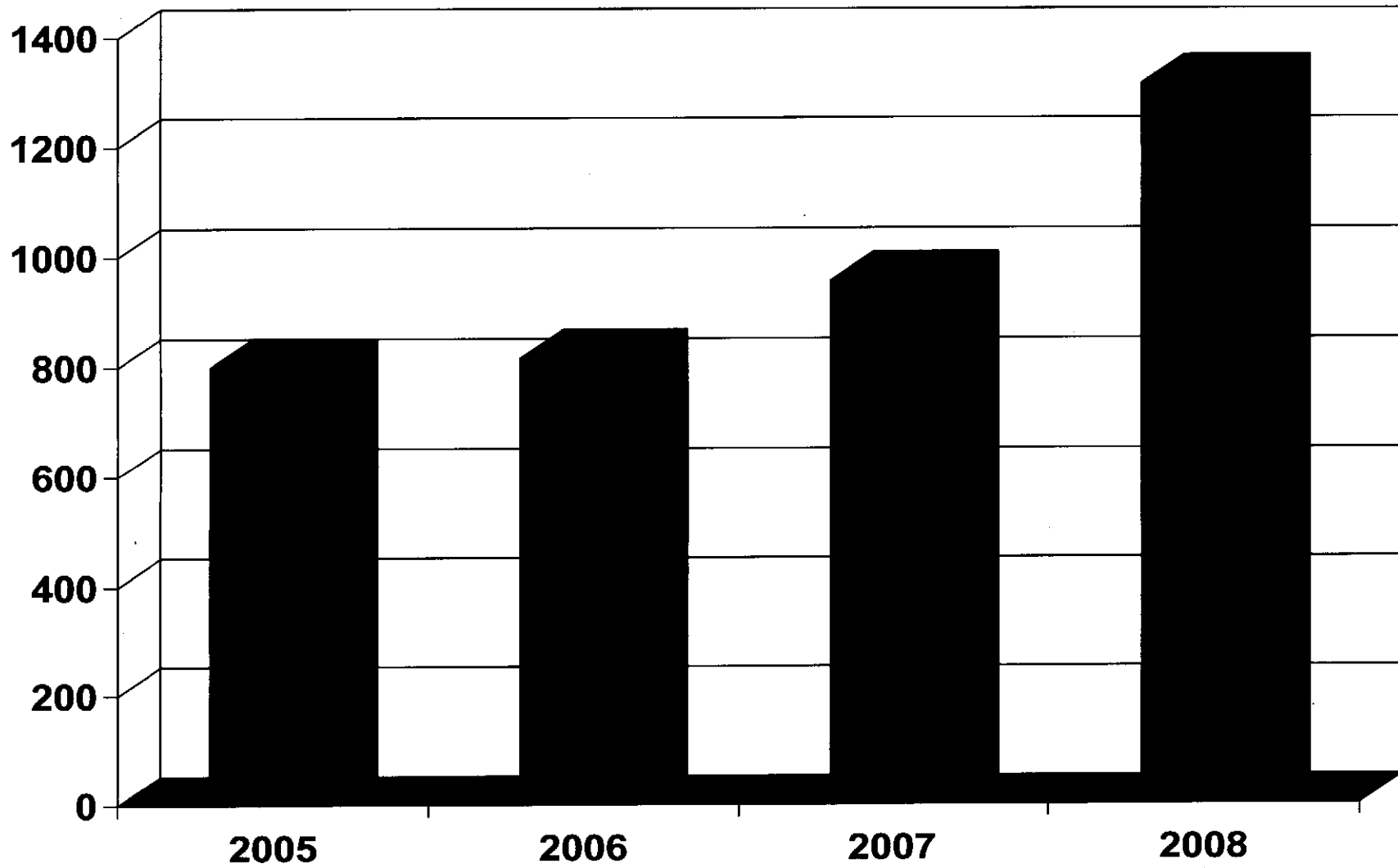
- Prescription drugs that are most commonly abused include three classes:
  - opioids
  - central nervous system (CNS) depressants
  - stimulants.
- The Drug Enforcement Administration's Automation of Reports and Consolidated Orders System (ARCOS) reports Florida physicians dispense five times more oxycodone than the national average of dispensing physicians.

# Prescription Drug Diversion

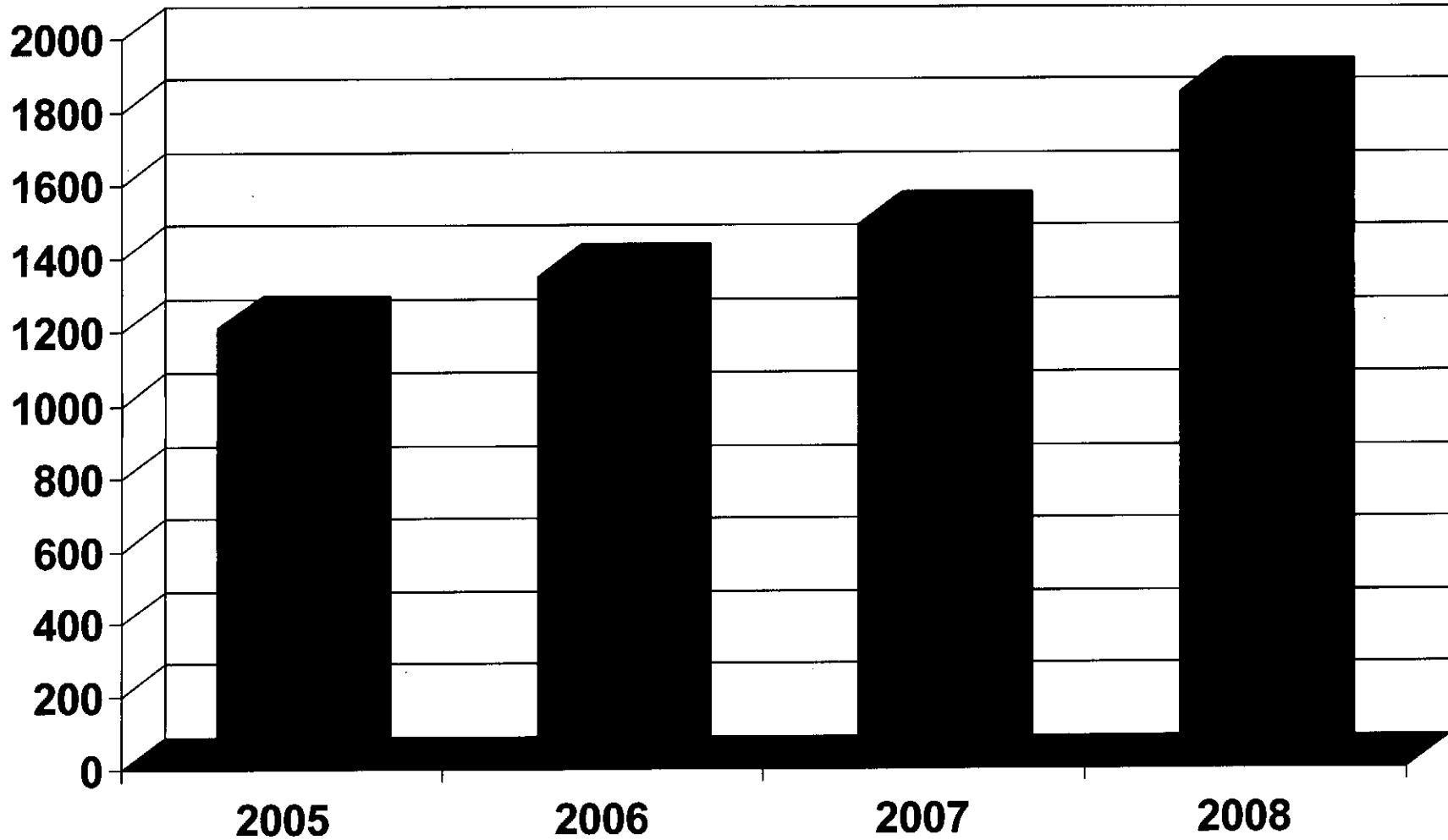
## Florida's Health Crisis

- Drunk drinking kills 3 Floridians per day.
- HIV kills 4 Floridians per day.
- Pneumonia kills 6 Floridians per day.
- All three are on a downward trend due to sustained, and comprehensive reduction strategies.
- Prescription drugs are now responsible for killing 7 Floridians per day, and has been on an *upward* trend for the past six years.

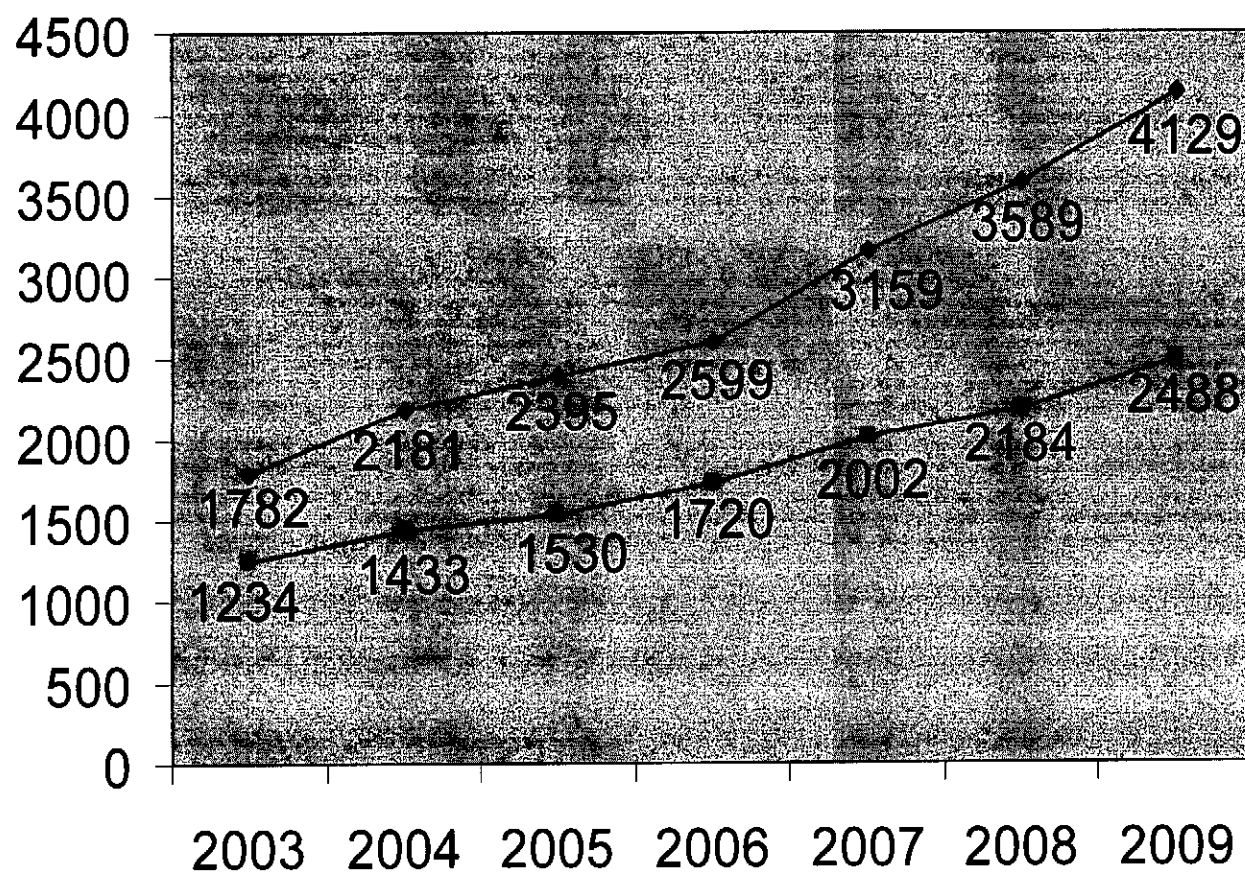
# Florida Emergency Department Diagnoses of Accidental Prescription Opiate Poisoning



# Florida Emergency Department Diagnosis of Accidental Poisoning by Prescription Benzodiazepines & Tranquilizers

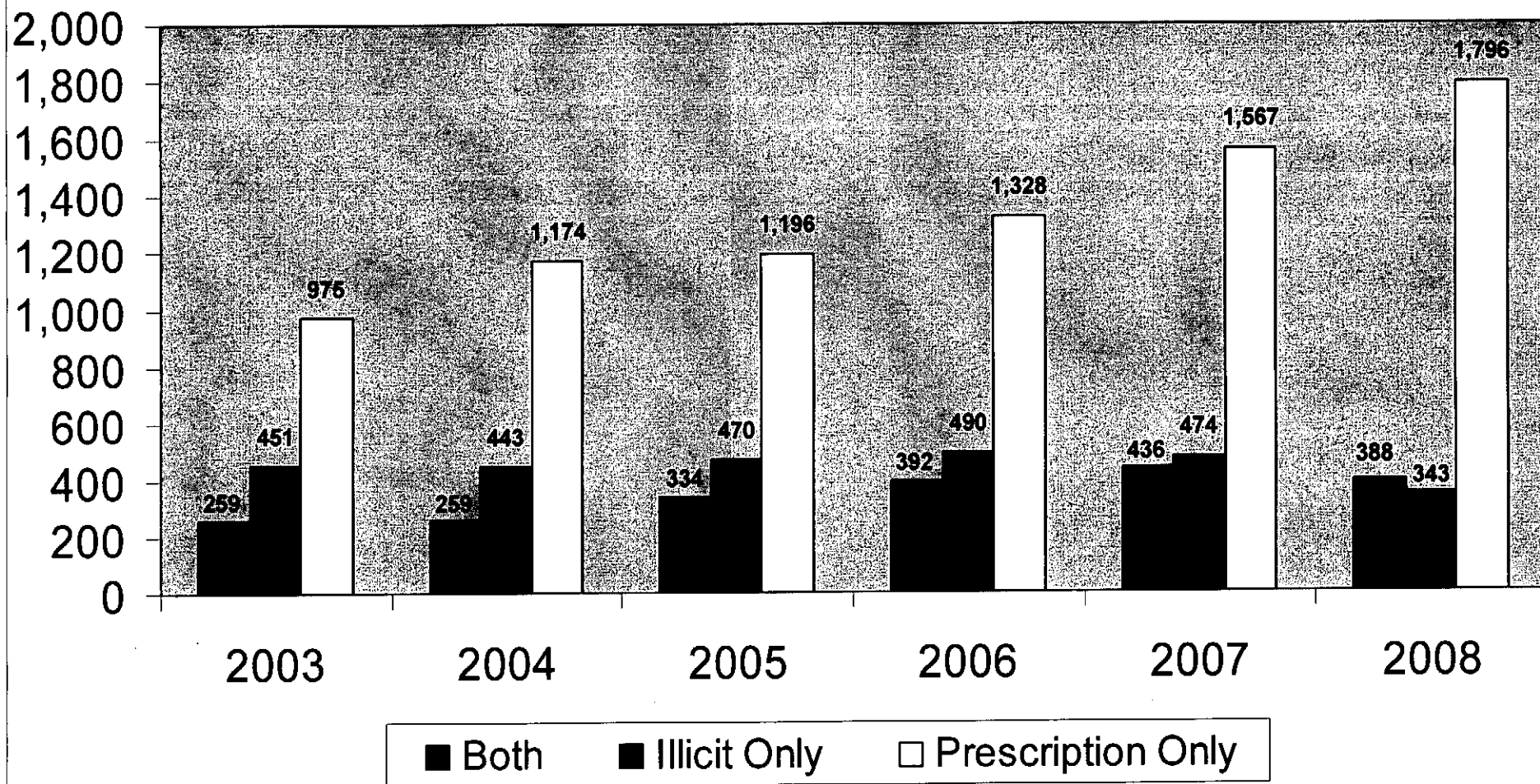


## Total Number of Lethal Occurrences of Prescription Drugs Vs. Number of Deaths Caused by at Least One Prescription Drug



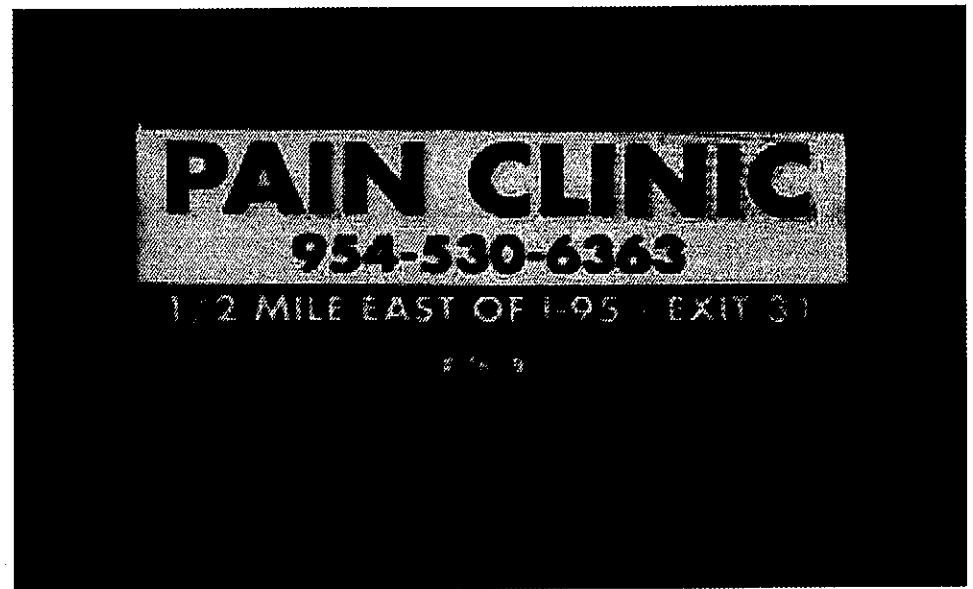
- ◆ Total Number of Lethal Occurrences of Prescription Drugs
- Number of Deaths Caused by at Least One Prescription Drug

## A Comparison of Deaths Caused by Prescription Drugs, Illicit Drugs, and Both in Combination



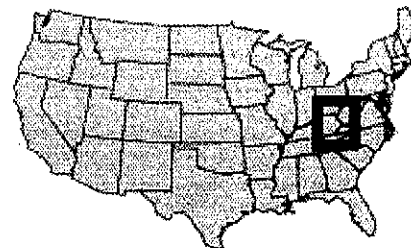
# Extent of the Problem – South Florida

- In 2007, there were 4 pain clinics operating in Broward County.
- Today, Broward Sheriff's Office lists 144 pain clinics operating in the county.
- Nationwide, the top 35 dispensing practitioners of oxycodone were located in Florida and 25 of those were located in Broward County.



# Feeding the nation's pill habit

*South Florida pill mills are the supply pipeline for users and dealers in several Eastern states. A recent sampler:*

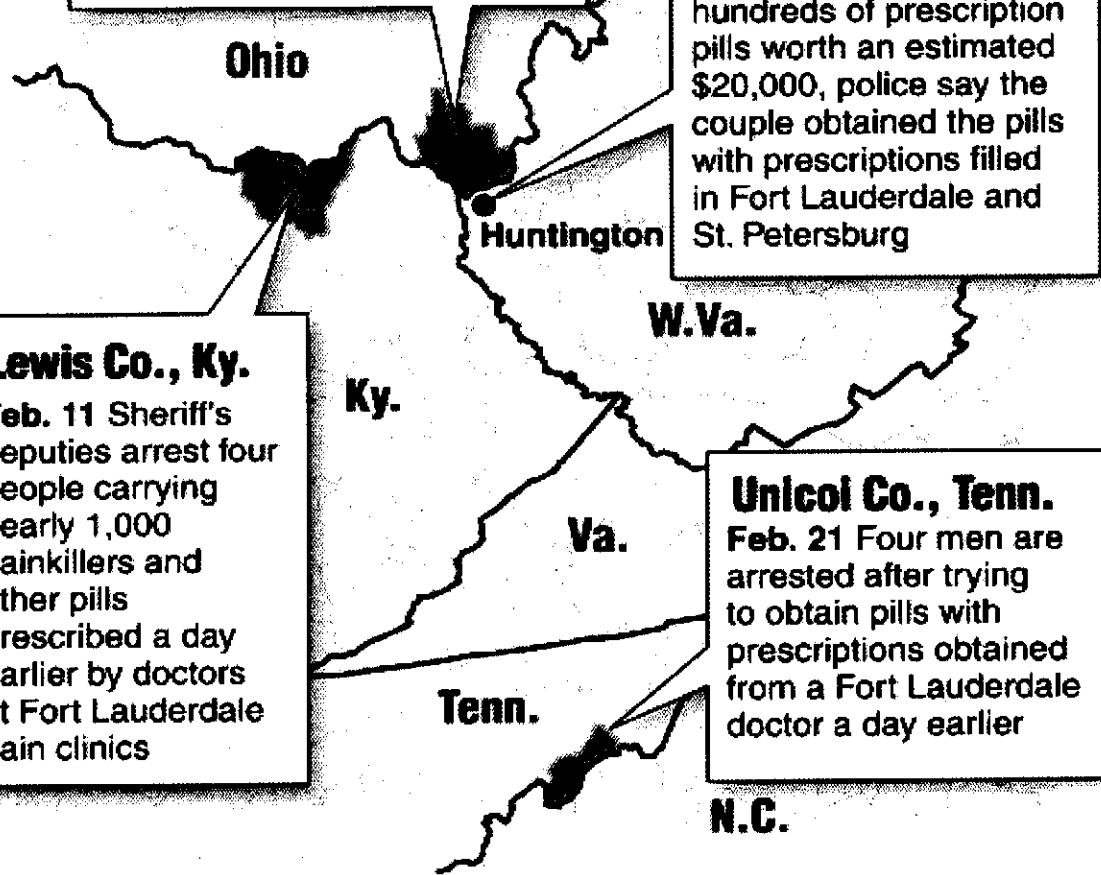


**Lawrence Co., Ohio**  
**March 23** A grand jury indicts 12 people after an undercover investigation reveals a network trafficking prescription drugs bought in South Florida

**Huntington, W.Va.**  
**March 26** Police arrest a Tennessee couple with hundreds of prescription pills worth an estimated \$20,000, police say the couple obtained the pills with prescriptions filled in Fort Lauderdale and St. Petersburg

**Lewis Co., Ky.**  
**Feb. 11** Sheriff's deputies arrest four people carrying nearly 1,000 painkillers and other pills prescribed a day earlier by doctors at Fort Lauderdale pain clinics

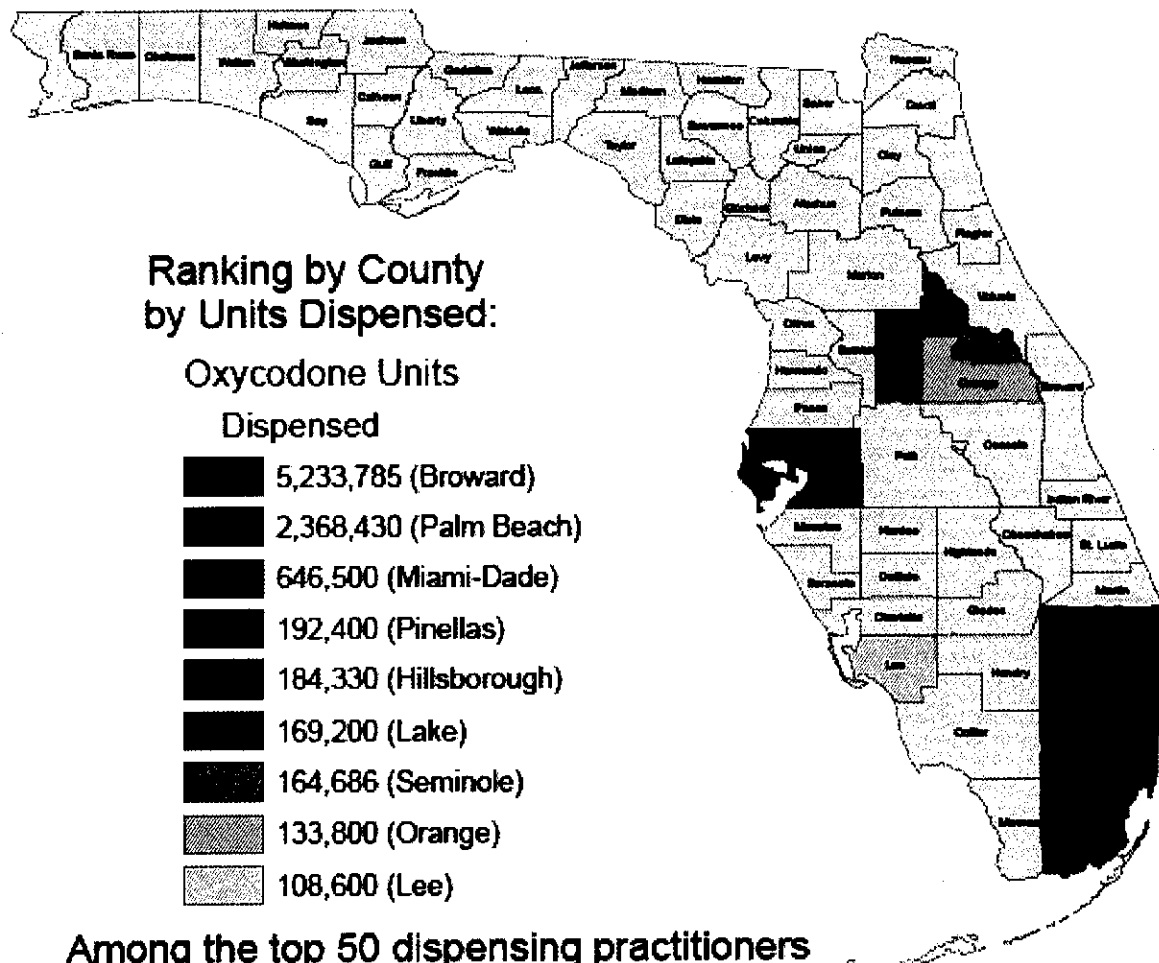
**Unicol Co., Tenn.**  
**Feb. 21** Four men are arrested after trying to obtain pills with prescriptions obtained from a Fort Lauderdale doctor a day earlier



# What are Pill Mills?

- A “pill mill” is a doctor’s office, clinic, or health care facility that routinely conspires in the prescribing and dispensing of controlled substances outside the scope of the prevailing standards of medical practice in the community or violates the laws of the state of Florida regarding the prescribing or dispensing of controlled prescription drugs.

# Top 50 Dispensing Practitioners of Oxycodone in the U.S. (49 in Florida) October 2008 - March 2009



Among the top 50 dispensing practitioners in the U.S., all but 1 are in Florida and are concentrated in 9 counties. Broward holds 50% of the top practitioners and 55.4% of the total units dispensed.

- Examples of advertisements of pain management clinics in Florida.

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# Prescription Drug Monitoring Program

- FS 893.055 creates the PDMP and the accompanying Public Records law, FS 893.0551, that limits access to confidential and private information in the PDMP database.
- Requires dispensing practitioners to report dispensed II – IV controlled drugs to the database no later than 15 days from the date of dispensing.
- The PDMP allows practitioners to:
  - request access to the patient’s prescription history information during office visit to ensure better patient standard of care
  - avoid prescribing medications that may be dangerous when taken in combination with other medications
  - identify possible “doctor shoppers”

# **The Goals of the PDMP**

- Support access to legitimate medical use of controlled substances.
- Help identify, deter and prevent drug abuse and diversion.
- Facilitate and encourage the identification, intervention and treatment of persons addicted to prescription drugs by health care practitioners.

## **What the PDMP Does Not Accomplish**

- Does not allow interstate sharing of prescription history information.
- Does not have the ability to provide “alerts” to regulatory boards or Medicaid fraud regarding potential “doctor shopping” or illegal and/or unprofessional conduct by health care professionals.
- The PDMP is not the “silver bullet” that by itself will reduce all diversion and abuse of prescription drugs in Florida.

# **What the PDMP Accomplishes**

- The use of the PDMP by physicians contributes significantly to patient safety and improved patient standard of care.
- The PDMP reduces the chances for patients to repeatedly and illegally divert prescription drugs.
- It facilitates and encourages the identification, intervention and treatment of persons addicted to prescription drugs.



# Conclusion

- The Broward Grand Jury recommended 18 steps to clean up Florida's "pill mills" -- the most important step was implementing the PDMP.
- The increased demand for pain management has helped fuel the problem of prescription drug diversion.
- Prescription drug diversion costs lives, increases crime, and accelerates costs connected to treatment, medical expenses and Medicaid fraud.