

Look Inside for Details

By Angelo M. Valente

# Annual Drug Testing Survey Shows Mixed Results

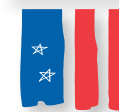
 Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey

155 Millburn Avenue  
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*Thank you...*  
*to all of the employers who*  
*have and continue to make sure that*  
***Drugs Don't Work in New Jersey.***

*On behalf of the Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey Board of Trustees and staff, we wish you, your staff, and all of your families a happy and healthy holiday season and prosperous and peaceful new year.*

# UPDATE



Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey  
In Cooperation with the Governor's Council on Alcoholism & Drug Abuse and the New Jersey Department of Human Services

**DRUGS  
DON'T  
WORK  
IN NJ!**

Update No. 69

Fall 2013

## Annual Drug Testing Survey Shows Mixed Results

By Angelo M. Valente

For this edition of the quarterly Drugs Don't Work newsletter, I'm pleased to report some good news: Americans in the workplace are testing positive less to marijuana and cocaine, according to a new study just published by Quest Diagnostics, Inc. Unfortunately, with good news often comes bad news: positive tests for amphetamines and other prescription drugs are on the rise.

This new study comes on the 25th anniversary of the 1988 Drug-Free Workplace Act, which brought to the forefront the need to create safe and productive places of work, free from drugs and alcohol. One of the new policies instituted by the piece of legislation was drug testing. (Quest Diagnostics, 2013)<sup>1</sup>

Senior medical director of Quest Diagnostics Dr. Harvey Kaufman, said: "Our goal for this seminal DTI report is to reveal both the huge progress made to date to deter the use of drugs by workers, but also to show that vigilance is required by employers seeking to create safe, healthy environments for their employees." (Quest Diagnostics, 2013 para. 12)

Since 1988, Quest Diagnostics reviewed over 125 million urine samples. Positive tests for the painkiller Vicodin rose an alarming 172% since 2005. On top of that, Positive test results for oxycontin rose 72% in the same time period. Positive tests for amphetamines have doubled in the last 8 years. If you have seen the headlines that have surrounded the prescription drug abuse issue in the last year, these numbers will not be a surprise to you. However, the numbers involved are truly staggering. (Weber, 2013)<sup>2</sup>

The news isn't all bad, however. Positive tests for illicit drugs such as marijuana and cocaine have dropped drastically. In fact, the number of positive tests dropped from 1988 to present day from 13.6% to 3.5%. Even then, the overwhelming majority of these positive tests were ordered for pre-employment screening, meaning that nearly 75% of all positive tests were not for actual employees, but potential employees. The remaining 25% were ordered because of suspicion. (Weber, 2013)



Now what does this all mean? Quest Diagnostics drew a couple interesting conclusions from these findings. While it is happy to see that positive tests for marijuana in the workplace have declined considerably, it is interesting to note that this trend doesn't hold true among the general population. In fact, according to a study conducted by the Department of Health and Human Services, 7.3% of Americans over the age of 12 admit to trying marijuana, an increase 5.8% from a mere four years ago. The same study also states 68% of drug users over the age of 18 were employed at the time of their usage. (Weber, 2013)

### How can this be?

Workers might be finding new, creative ways to "beat the system" and compromise their samples, allowing them to beat the positive test. It is becoming clear that in the ever changing landscape of substance abuse, our drug screening policies must also adapt if safe work environments are to be created.

If we have learned anything as prescription drug abuse has tightened its grip across the nation, it's that legal drugs, when abused, can be just as harmful and damaging as illegal ones.

We know that prescription drugs can work medical marvels when taken properly, as directed by a doctor. As easily as they can save lives, they can take them away when abused.

It is for this reason that the Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey started the American Medicine Chest Challenge, a public-private community based initiative with the objective of ending prescription drug abuse in New Jersey and across the country. American Medicine Chest Challenge was the first program of its kind that offered drop off boxes for unused, unwanted, and expired prescription drugs in police departments and other law enforcement offices to be destroyed according local, state, and federal regulations. Our annual National Day of Awareness encourages follow the American Medicine Chest Challenge 5 Steps, which are to take stock of your medicine, secure your medicine chest, dispose of your unwanted, unused, and expired medications at an American Medicine Chest Challenge disposal site, take your medicines exactly as prescribed and do not share with family or friends, and most importantly, talk to your kids about the dangers of prescription drug abuse. Since

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the initiative launched in 2008, the American Medicine Chest Challenge has more 1,000 locations across the country and, in 2010, was featured as a model program in the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy’s National Drug Control Strategy.

POSITIVITY RATES BY TESTING CATEGORY – Urine Drug Tests					
Testing Category	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Federally Mandated, Safety-Sensitive Workforce	1.6%	1.5%	1.5%	1.7%	1.6%
General U.S. Workforce	4.2%	4.2%	4.2%	4.1%	4.1%
Combined U.S. Workforce	3.6%	3.6%	3.5%	3.5%	3.5%

POSITIVITY RATES BY TESTING REASON – Urine Drug Tests					
Testing Reason	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Follow-Up	2.2%	2.5%	2.4%	2.8%	2.8%
For Cause	9.9%	11.1%	9.7%	7.5%	8.5%
Periodic	0.71%	0.82%	1.0%	1.6%	1.5%
Post-Accident	2.3%	2.2%	2.2%	2.3%	2.4%
Pre-Employment	1.7%	1.5%	1.6%	1.8%	1.7%
Random	1.4%	1.4%	1.4%	1.5%	1.4%
Returned to Duty	3.1%	3.0%	3.3%	2.5%	2.7%

Data from Quest Diagnostics, 2013



Despite all of these efforts and similar grassroots programs being started across the country, prescription drug abuse has grown to epidemic proportions and it is clear from this study that this issue is permeating the workplace. The objective of the Drugs Don’t Work in New Jersey program is to establish drug testing policies to encourage safe and drug-free work environments. Prescription drugs, even taken under a doctor’s care, can have the side effects that can limit an employee’s ability to perform certain duties.

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The fact is that employers have a responsibility to their employees to create safe work environments. Mary Brown-Ybos, Director of Compliance for DISA Global Solutions, Inc, and president of the Substance Abuse Program Administrators Association (SAPAA) said: “Some industries such as the restaurant industry have adopted an attitude that drug use in their industry is something they cannot control. The fact remains that drugs in the workforce contribute to industrial and other accidents, not to mention employer costs and liability.” (Quest Diagnostics, 2013 para. 10)



<sup>1</sup>“Drug Test Index.” QuestDiagnostics.com. Quest Diagnostics, 18 Nov. 2013. Web. 22 Nov. 2013.  
<sup>2</sup>Weber, Lauren. “Drug Use on Decline at Work, Except Rx.” Wall Street Journal. Wall Street Journal, 19 Nov. 2013. Web. 20 Nov. 2013.

About the Author

Angelo M. Valente, Executive Director, Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey

Angelo M. Valente has been the Executive Director of the Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey, since its inception in 1992, and has led this organization in becoming the largest continuous Public Service Campaign in New Jersey’s history.

In 2009, Mr. Valente was appointed as the Chief Executive Officer of the American Medicine Chest Challenge (AMCC), a national public health initiative to raise awareness of the issue of prescription drug abuse and maintain a National Directory of Permanent Prescription Drug Collection sites. AMCC services over 1,000 community and law enforcement partners in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and three Indian Nations.

Mr. Valente and the Partnership have been recognized by the White House Office of National Drug-Control Policy, the Community Anti-Drug Coalition of America, the Partnership at Drugfree.org, and the National Association of Government Communicators for their creative and innovative substance abuse prevention campaigns and initiatives.

He serves as a member of the Holy See’s Delegation to the United Nations, focusing on international drug control strategy.

Notice: These articles reflect the opinion of the author and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of Partnership for a Drug-Free New Jersey (PDFNJ). This information should not be construed as legal advice from the author or PDFNJ. Please consult your own attorney before making any legal decisions.