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OPIOID USE IN NEW JERSEY: PUBLIC FAVORS TREATMENT MORE THAN PENALTIES

Fairleigh Dickinson University, December 6, 2017 – If you live in the Garden State, you have about a 50-50 chance that your life has been touched by someone with an opioid addiction. In a wide-ranging, statewide survey of attitudes toward opioid addiction from Fairleigh Dickinson University and its School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences, Garden State residents appear torn over how to make sense of the ravages of opioid abuse, yet are decidedly more supportive of treatment over incarceration.

A majority of adults in New Jersey (53%) say that opioid addicts suffer from a treatable disease as opposed to just a third (32%) who say lack of self-control is the culprit. However, New Jerseyans are also far more likely to blame a person's individual choices for abusing prescription painkillers (65%) than to blame a person's genetic predisposition (19%).

“Research points toward several genetic factors that may contribute to opioid addiction; however, some non-genetic factors also play a role and can be viewed as within the control of a patient,” said Dr. Anastasia Rivkin, professor of pharmacy practice at the Fairleigh Dickinson University School of Pharmacy and Health Sciences. “Additionally, since law enforcement has historically prosecuted individuals for drug possession, it's not surprising to see that the public views opioid addiction as a character flaw rather than a chronic treatable medical condition.”

Despite the causes, residents are clearly on the side of helping those with addictions, whether they are struggling with opioids, illegal drugs like heroin and crack cocaine, and alcohol. And, support for assistance ranges from the workplace to treatment centers in one's neighborhood.

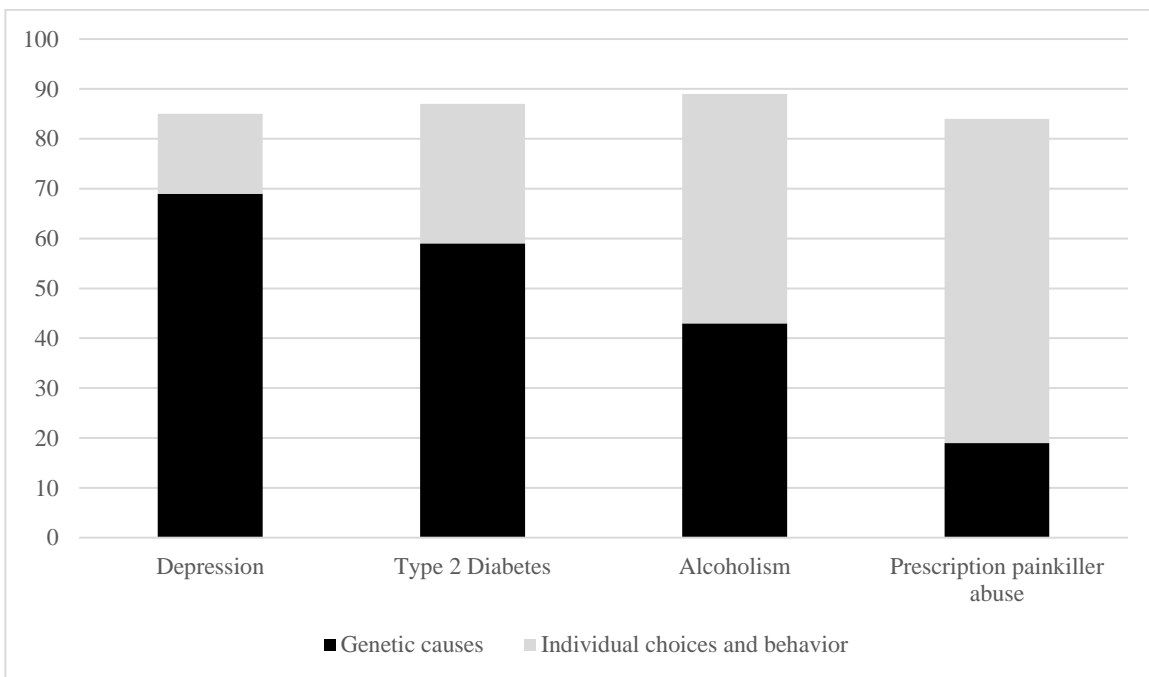
When asked if employers who become aware of an employee's addiction to prescription painkillers should offer treatment or terminate employment, 84 percent favor treatment over lost employment (8%). The same attitudes relate to those with alcohol addiction. Eighty-five percent support treatment over losing one's job (8%).

When the question turns to how society should treat those caught abusing opioid prescription drugs and illegal drugs like crack cocaine or heroin, there is little appetite for prison time. Eighty-one percent favor treatment over prison (16%) for opioid addicts, and 76 percent say treatment is preferable to prison (16%) for illegal drug abusers.

There's also not much of a NIMBY (not in my backyard) effect in the Garden State when it comes to treatment centers. Only one in five (20%) say they would be opposed to a treatment center for those addicted to prescription painkiller addictions if it was being built in their community, with 72 percent who would favor its placement.

“Since opioid abuse is a chronic disease with a high relapse rate, medication assisted treatment along with ongoing psychosocial support works to help those who are suffering,” said Rivkin. “It’s good to know that New Jersey residents understand this and aren’t opposed to more treatment centers, even if they’re in their community.”

When compared with other types of addictions, Garden State residents are more likely to recognize the importance of genetics for their grip on certain individuals as compared with opioid addictions. Sixty-nine percent say genetics explain depression, as compared with 16 percent who believe individual choices and behavior are the cause of mental malaise. Fewer (59%) say genetic causes are behind those afflicted with Type 2 diabetes. Twenty-eight percent say the choices of the patient are more to blame. Opinion is divided over what lurks behind alcoholism. Forty-three percent believe genetics explain an addiction to drinking, with 46 percent who say choices and behavior bring it on. All of these attitudes offer a stark comparison to the responses offered when prescription painkiller abuse is the focus. As stated earlier, by a three-to-one ratio, adults are more likely to look at the addicts themselves when explaining their addiction as opposed to the belief that genetic predispositions are to blame.



As for who should contribute the most to providing treatment for those addicted to prescription painkillers, the pharmaceutical industry is cited the most often. Forty-three percent believe the drug industry itself should bear the biggest burden, with private insurers, the government, and addicts being looked to in numbers that are similar and significantly fewer than those for the pharmaceutical industry (14, 15, and 12% respectively).

A note about politics

Across most of the questions asked in this survey, perhaps not surprisingly Democrats and Republicans are likely to understand the scourge of opioid addiction differently. For example, although two-thirds of Democrats see opioid addiction as a treatable disease, not even a majority of Republicans believe the same (40%). And, while a majority of ideologues from both parties believe in treatment over prison, significantly fewer Republicans offer that response for both opioid addicts and those who use illegal drugs like heroin or crack cocaine. Around nine-in-ten Democrats believe treatment is warranted for opioid and illegal drug users, as compared with not even three quarters of Republicans.

“Our outgoing governor and the president have both made opioid treatment a priority. If resistance to public solutions appears that doesn’t involve more prisons, it looks like Republicans will be a harder sell,” said Krista Jenkins, professor of political science and director of the FDU poll.

Methodology, questions, and tables on the web at: <http://publicmind.fdu.edu>

Radio actualities at 201.692.2846

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Methodology - The Fairleigh Dickinson University poll was conducted by landline and cellular telephone October 11-15, 2017 among a random sample of 875 using a listed sample of registered voters with a known history of voting in past elections. Results have a margin of sampling error of +/- 3.7 percentage points, including the design effect.

Survey results are also subject to non-sampling error. This kind of error, which cannot be measured, arises from a number of factors including, but not limited to, non-response (eligible individuals refusing to be interviewed), que48stion wording, the order in which questions are asked, and variations among interviewers.

Interviews are conducted by Opinion America of Cedar Knolls, NJ, with professionally trained interviewers using a CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing) system. Random selection is achieved by computerized random-digit dialing. This technique gives every person with a landline phone number (including those with unlisted numbers) an equal chance of being selected.

The total combined sample is mathematically weighted to match known demographics of age, sex, and race. 520 interviews were conducted on landlines and 355 were conducted on cellular telephones.

The sample was purchased from Marketing Systems Group and the research was funded by Fairleigh Dickinson University.

Past surveys used for comparison in this analysis were based on registered voters who were not drawn from a listed sample of those with a known history of voting in past elections.

The FDU poll recently received an “A” rating from statistician Nate Silver’s FiveThirtyEight blog. The ratings measure both accuracy and bias for all major polling services in the United States, providing an update to similar research the poll watchers conducted in 2014. FDU’s “A” rating puts it in the top 14 of the more than 380 polling institutes reviewed and graded from A+ through F. The FDU poll was found to have a 94 percent accuracy rate for predicting election results, and is one of only two A-rated polling institutes with zero bias to their rankings.

Based on what you know, would you say that those who are addicted to prescription painkillers, like Oxycontin, Percocet, or Vicodin, suffer from a treatable disease or is their addiction due to a lack of self-control?

	All	Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
		Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-59	60+	D	I	R
Disease	53%	57	49	48	57	56	43	43	59	50	56	48	65	46	40
Self-control	32%	27	36	34	30	28	44	42	26	36	30	34	22	38	43
DK (vol)	13%	13	13	16	11	13	12	14	13	11	12	15	11	14	15
Refused (vol)	2%	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	3	2	3	2	2	2

Should employers who find out their workers are abusing prescription painkillers offer treatment options or should they lose their jobs [rotate]?

	All	Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
		Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-59	60+	D	I	R
Offer treatment	84%	85	83	79	88	82	91	85	84	88	86	80	90	82	77
Lose jobs	8%	8	8	10	6	9	5	8	8	9	8	8	4	10	13
DK (vol)	7%	6	7	9	4	8	4	7	7	3	6	9	5	6	8
Refused (vol)	2%	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	0	1	3	1	2	2

Should employers who find out their workers are abusing alcohol offer treatment options or should they lose their jobs [rotate]?

	All	Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
		Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-59	60+	D	I	R
Offer treatment	85%	88	83	82	88	84	92	88	84	87	86	84	92	81	78
Lose jobs	8%	8	9	10	6	8	7	7	9	10	8	8	4	12	13
DK (vol)	5%	4	7	6	5	7	1	5	6	3	5	7	4	6	8
Refused (vol)	1%	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1

If you knew your community was considering allowing a treatment center for people seeking treatment from prescription painkiller addiction, would you favor or oppose [rotate] this center?

	All	Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
		Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-59	60+	D	I	R
Favor	72%	76	69	72	73	69	84	72	73	86	72	70	80	75	63
Oppose	20%	17	22	20	20	22	12	19	20	9	22	19	14	18	28
DK (vol)	7%	5	8	7	7	8	3	8	6	3	6	9	6	5	8
Refused (vol)	1%	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	2

I'm going to read you some health problems that many are experiencing today. For each one, please tell me if you believe individual choices and behavior OR genetic pre-disposition [rotate] are more to blame? [ROTATE OP6A THROUGH OP6D]

<i>Type 2 Diabetes</i>															
		Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
	All	Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-59	60+	D	I	R
Individual choice	28%	31	26	28	29	27	32	23	32	28	33	23	29	28	28
Genetic	59%	57	61	57	61	59	60	65	56	63	56	63	59	60	60
DK (vol)	11%	11	12	14	9	12	7	12	11	7	11	13	11	11	12
Refused (vol)	1%	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1

<i>Alcoholism</i>															
		Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
	All	Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-59	60+	D	I	R
Individual choice	46%	38	53	54	38	42	57	53	41	56	45	44	37	48	55
Genetic	43%	52	35	34	51	46	35	39	46	34	43	45	50	43	36
DK (vol)	9%	8	10	9	9	11	3	7	10	9	8	10	9	8	8
Refused (vol)	2%	2	3	2	2	1	4	1	3	1	4	1	3	1	1

<i>Prescription painkiller abuse</i>															
		Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
	All	Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-59	60+	D	I	R
Individual choice	65%	62	69	72	59	64	69	70	63	70	64	66	58	66	75
Genetic	19%	22	16	15	23	21	12	15	21	17	20	18	21	20	16
DK (vol)	13%	13	13	12	15	12	15	15	12	10	13	14	18	12	8
Refused (vol)	2%	3	2	2	3	2	3	1	4	3	3	2	3	2	2

<i>Depression</i>															
		Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
	All	Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	45-59	60+	D	I	R
Individual choice	16%	17	16	21	12	15	20	21	14	20	14	19	13	20	20
Genetic	69%	69	69	63	75	69	69	66	71	65	74	64	74	68	63
DK (vol)	13%	12	13	14	12	13	11	12	13	13	11	15	12	9	14
Refused (vol)	2%	2	2	2	2	2	0	1	2	2	2	2	1	3	3

In general, do you believe that individuals caught abusing opioid prescription drugs without a prescription should be given treatment or prison time? [rotate]

	All	Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
		Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-59	60+	D	I	R
Treatment	81%	81	80	79	82	79	84	78	82	87	80	80	91	74	70
Prison	13%	13	13	13	12	13	12	15	11	10	13	14	7	17	18
DK (vol)	6%	5	6	6	6	6	4	6	6	3	7	5	2	8	11
Refused (vol)	1%	2	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1

In general, do you believe that individuals caught abusing illegal drugs, like heroin or crack cocaine, should be given treatment or prison time? [rotate]

	All	Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
		Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-59	60+	D	I	R
Treatment	76%	79	75	74	79	73	89	74	78	87	75	76	88	79	61
Prison	16%	15	17	17	16	19	9	20	14	10	17	17	8	13	29
DK (vol)	6%	5	7	7	5	7	1	5	7	3	7	5	3	7	9
Refused (vol)	1%	1	1	2	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	2

In your opinion, who should contribute the most to providing treatment for those addicted to prescription painkillers?

	All	Know addict		Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
		Yes	No	Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-59	60+	D	I	R
Pharmaceutical industry	43%	46	40	41	45	45	39	43	43	33	48	39	46	41	39
Private insurers	14%	14	14	13	15	15	12	10	16	16	13	14	11	16	17
Government	15%	14	16	18	13	13	23	16	15	31	10	18	19	19	9
Addicts	12%	12	13	12	12	12	11	15	11	13	14	10	8	10	19
Other (vol)	10%	11	10	12	9	10	10	10	10	2	11	12	10	8	11
DK (vol)	5%	3	6	5	5	5	7	5	4	5	3	6	4	5	5
Refused (vol)	1%	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0

Do you personally know anyone who has struggled with an opioid addiction?

	All	Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
		Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	35-59	60+	D	I	R
Yes	48%	45	50	51	39	51	46	47	52	43	49	43	48
No	52%	54	49	49	61	49	54	52	48	56	51	57	51
DK (vol)	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1
Refused (vol)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Now I'd like to ask you some questions about prescription painkillers, sometimes called opioids, such as Percoset, Oxycontin, or Vicoden. During the past two years, have you taken a strong prescription painkiller, like the ones I just mentioned?

	All	Gender		Race		Education		Age			Party		
		Male	Female	White	Non-white	HS	College	18-34	45-59	60+	D	I	R
Yes	21%	22	19	22	19	20	22	17	23	19	22	19	19
No	79%	77	80	78	81	80	78	83	77	80	77	80	80
DK (vol)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Refused (vol)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1

Question wording and order

ELEC1 and ELEC2 released October 17, 2017

US1 and US2 released October 18, 2017

NJ1 and NJ2 released October 17, 2017

ELEC3 and ELEC4 released October 18, 2017

ELEC5 through ELEC8

NJ3 through NJ5 released November 9, 2017

NJ6 through NJ8 released November 6, 2017

OP1 Now I'd like to ask you some questions about prescription painkillers, sometimes called opioids, such as Percoset, Oxycontin, or Vicoden. During the past two years, have you taken a strong prescription painkiller, like the ones I just mentioned?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

OP2 Based on what you know, would you say that those who are addicted to prescription painkillers, like Oxycontin, Percocet, or Vicodin, suffer from a treatable disease or is their addiction due to a lack of self-control?

- 1 Treatable disease
- 2 Self control
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Rotate OP3 and OP4

OP3 Should employers who find out their workers are abusing prescription painkillers offer treatment options or should they lose their jobs [rotate]?

- 1 Offer treatment
- 2 Lose jobs
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

OP4 Should employers who find out their workers are abusing alcohol offer treatment options or should they lose their jobs [rotate]?

- 1 Offer treatment
- 2 Lose jobs
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

OP5 If you knew your community was considering allowing a treatment center for people seeking treatment from prescription painkiller addiction, would you favor or oppose [rotate] this center?

- 1 Favor
- 2 Oppose
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

OP6 I'm going to read you some health problems that many are experiencing today. For each one, please tell me if you believe individual choices and behavior OR genetic pre-disposition [rotate] are more to blame? [ROTATE OP6A THROUGH OP6D]

OP6A Type 2 Diabetes

OP6B Alcoholism

OP6C Prescription painkiller abuse

OP6D Depression

- 1 Individual choices and behavior
- 2 Genetic pre-disposition
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Rotate OP7 and OP8

OP7 In general, do you believe that individuals caught abusing opioid prescription drugs without a prescription should be given treatment or prison time [rotate]?

- 1 Treatment
- 2 Prison
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

OP8 In general, do you believe that individuals caught abusing illegal drugs, like heroin or crack cocaine, should be given treatment or prison time [rotate]?

- 1 Treatment
- 2 Prison
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

OP9 In your opinion, who should contribute the MOST to providing treatment for those addicted to prescription painkillers?

- 1 The pharmaceutical industry
- 2 Private insurers
- 3 Government
- 4 Addicts
- 5 Other (vol)
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

OP10 Do you personally know anyone who has struggled with an opioid addiction?

- 1 Yes
- 2 No
- 8 DK (vol)
- 9 Refused (vol)

Sample characteristics

Male	49%
Female	51%

Democrat (with leaners)	47%
Republican (with leaners)	35%
Independent	15%

18-34	10%
35-59	51%
60+	39%

White	73%
African-American	12%

Latino	10%
Asian	2%
Other/refused	3%