

A Growing Problem in US: Prescription Drug ODs

Xanax, Ativan, Valium found in Whitney Houston's Room

Mary Papenfuss | Newser

(Newser) – It will likely be weeks before we know the official cause of Whitney Houston's death, but the fact that bottles of Xanax, Valium, and Ativan were found in her room is shining a light on the dangers of prescription drug abuse, and the real risk of accidental overdose. An estimated 27,000 people died from accidental drug overdoses in the US in 2007, one death every 19 minutes, according to the most recent figures available from the CDC, reports ABC News. Prescription drug abuse is the nation's fastest growing drug problem.

Addiction to legal drugs can give an addict a false sense of safety, warn experts. "What often happens with illegal drug addiction is that the treatment involves legal drugs, which can be even more challenging to quit," says Alesandra Rain, a co-founder of rehab group Point of Return. "Because Xanax is legal, it gives [many] the false sense that they are safe." Unscrupulous doctors can fuel a celebrity's problem at a time they may feel they're being carefully monitored by a physician. Prescription drug addiction is suspected in the death of Nick Carter's 25 year old sister, Leslie, earlier this month. At least 15 celebrities including Heath Ledger, have died of prescription drug overdoses in the last five years.

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