



A top Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) official said this week the high rates of abuse of hydrocodone combination pills demonstrate physicians aren't taking the risks of these medications seriously.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is holding an advisory meeting to consider a proposal by the DEA to more tightly control prescriptions of drugs containing hydrocodone, such as Vicodin.

"This drug has got a hold of this society and it's killing us," Joseph Rannazzisi, deputy assistant administrator in the DEA's Office of Diversion Control, said Thursday at the FDA meeting.

"There's so many prescriptions out there and I'll tell you why. The medical community, in my humble opinion, is not taking this drug seriously."

The DEA has asked the FDA to limit prescriptions of hydrocodone combination pills and cough suppressants to a 90-day supply, Bloomberg reports.

Currently, doctors can write prescriptions with five refills within six months. The DEA proposal would also prevent physician assistants and nurse practitioners from prescribing the drugs. Hydrocodone combination products include less potent painkillers, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen. They are currently considered Schedule III controlled substances. Pure hydrocodone is a Schedule II drug, which is more tightly controlled.

The DEA is asking the FDA to reclassify hydrocodone combination products as Schedule II drugs. The FDA advisory panel is scheduled to vote today on a recommendation about hydrocodone combination drugs.

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