

# The Dangers of Drugging the Elderly

Editorial Staff

According to a survey conducted for the National Council on Aging, 18% of Americans over age 60 (7.5 million people) take medication for chronic pain. Of those 7.5 million seniors, 26% (1.95 million) experience side effects, half of which are severe:

Side Effects	Percent of Seniors Affected
Drowsiness	20%
Dizziness	18%
Gastrointestinal Disorders	17%
Nausea/Vomiting/Diarrhea	13%
Constipation	12%
Hospitalization	10%

Forty-one percent of the seniors who suffer from these side effects (800,000) take another drug to "manage" the side effects. Of greater concern is that 58% of the seniors who take pain medication also take other drugs for other ailments. And yet 48% of the seniors say that their doctors don't tell them about the possible harmful interaction between pain drugs and other medications they take.

----- SOURCE: The Study of Pain and Older Americans. Louis Harris and Associates survey, 1997.

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