

potent, 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine and, thus, potentially fatal in even small doses. Chico attracted national news coverage in January when a man died and at least a dozen adults were treated at Enloe Medical Center after a mass overdose of fentanyl.

“If people are seeking oxycontin and the supply through pharmacies and other legitimate means has become more difficult to obtain,” Honea continued, “the fact that illegal drug suppliers are manufacturing fake oxycontin pills using fentanyl demonstrates there’s a significant problem [with addiction] but also represents a significant health problem.”

Along with heroin and fentanyl, O’Brien mentioned information about prescription painkiller use presented by Dr. Andy Miller, Butte County’s public health officer. Miller, alarmed by the amount of opioids in Butte County, championed community prescribing guidelines adopted by primary care providers and emergency room physicians (see “An uphill battle,” Healthlines, Nov. 2, 2017).

Miller declined to comment for this article, but he previously cited studies indicating greater effectiveness of opioids for relieving acute, or short-term, pain than chronic, or long-term, pain. Miller also pointed to risks of dependence and overdose that grow with protracted use.

“From what I’ve heard,”

Personal security tips:

- Be alert, inside and around the pharmacy.
- Report suspicious activity to police.
- Don’t intervene and risk endangering yourself.
- If prescribed opioids, secure your pills and don’t tell others.

O’Brien said by phone, “we’ve created a whole other tier of addicts from this medication—in fact, I know of people who have died from this medication, these addictions.

“The genie was kind of out of the bottle, but then there was an effort to get some control, which is good. Then you had, I think, some more desperation.”

Balbutin said this clampdown period corresponds with the increase in robberies, a connection Honea and O’Brien also made. She’s invested in new security measures for both pharmacies, which are neighbors on Cohasset Road until Paradise Drug rebuilds from the Camp Fire, and increased private patrols.

She also has changed the way the staff—including her sister, Ava, and brother, Ray—operates. They’re more cautious, more observant. Delivery drivers use cars without signage. Employees get escorted to their cars. Balbutin, 74, has stopped working late and takes precautions as she drives home.

Said Denna: “It’s definitely something that’s always in the back of your mind.” □

WEEKLY DOSE

Bad eggs

The new verdict is in: As your frisky little hens are finally laying them by the basketful, word on the street is you may have to cut back on the whole-some egg. Fact is, the yolk of an egg contains 186 mg of cholesterol, and most doctors recommend no more than 300 mg of cholesterol a day. That sure puts a damper on that Saturday morning three-egg omelet. A new study published this month in the **Journal of the American Medical Association** detailed research gathered from almost 30,000 people in the U.S. over 17-plus years, and the data showed that consuming more than the recommended amount of dietary cholesterol was associated with a 3.2 percent higher risk of heart disease and a 4.4 percent higher risk of early death. But don’t lose heart just yet—how the eggs are cooked makes a difference, as do other unhealthy behaviors you may partake in. So maybe hard-boil it and chow down while walking around the block.

Source: CNN Health

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