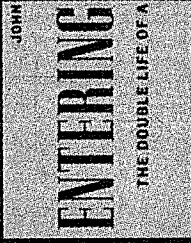


Bound



Letters to the Editor

Don't Ignore Prescription Drug Deaths

As a specialist in addiction therapy and treatment, I would like to comment on Angie Hargot's insightful article, which brings into focus the prevalence of self-medication, the use of prescription drugs and the sobering statistics that it represents. ["Prescription for Death" by Angie Hargot, published Dec. 20.]

As Howard Lerner, clinical director of South Miami Hospital's substance abuse treatment program, stated, "We've become a medicated society. Ten years ago, we never saw drugs marketed on TV.... The availability is a progression of the numbers.... [And] many more people are attracted to it."

Lerner's observation reveals the reality of the new pharmaceutical high-life making its way into the average home and reaching across the age spectrum — from adolescents to seniors and all ages in between. This "prescription for death" phenomenon is, at its simplest level, a reliance on the medicinal crutch. The stigma of pill popping is eroding and a lackadaisical attitude to drug use in general is escalating. The statistics are frightening (according to the article, deaths caused by prescription drugs were three times more prevalent in the first half of 2007 than those caused by illicit drugs). Society, affected through massive medical marketing and advertising, is becoming too tolerant of the physician's stroke of the pen. Many patients are "doctor shopping" in order to get unlimited access to their favorite prescription drug.

Hate to socialize? Take Paxil. Can't deal with your spouse wanting some "elbow room"? Take Klonopin. Got romance trouble? Take Prozac. Got to meet a deadline? Take Ritalin. Test tomorrow? Take Adderall. We are treading on a dangerous diagnosis for society — a pill for every ill. For

young adults, the abuse of prescription stimulants such as Ritalin and Adderall can become psychological crossovers that may eventually lead to death when mixed with other illicit drugs and alcohol. According to Lerner, "Younger people are selling [prescription drugs] on the streets." OxyContin is a favorite among the teens.

The increase in prescription drug-related deaths must not be ignored. Florida citizens need to take a strong position on this issue and support the pilot program that would track pain-killer prescriptions. Misuse of the prescription drugs does pose deep concerns not only as gateway drugs for further substance abuse, but also as a deadly epidemic revealed by the statistical data.

*Marino E. Carbonell
South Miami*

Why Don't Those Beach People Live and Let Live?

I loved the story about the ministry on the beach. ["Ocean's Ministry" by Keyvan Antonio Heydari, published Jan. 10.] I know and love Rambo and the other homeless people here. I have been friends and have tried to help them for several years now, and you'd be surprised to learn what nice people most of the homeless there are!

I disagree with the people who say they call the police on them once a day. I'm over on Ocean Way and 74th Street all the time, and it's a beautiful area, and I never see the homeless misbehaving at all.

I'd like to say to the people who are complaining about the homeless — do you think you are so much better than these people who have fallen on hard times? Most of you are just one or two paychecks away from being home-

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