

A nine-site update of his 1975 eighteen-site study by Dr. Finkle indicates decreasing propoxyphene-associated deaths since 1975.

The Character of Propoxyphene Abuse

Our analysis of available information has led us to conclude that the great majority of propoxyphene-associated deaths result from suicidal intent.

During the recent Senate hearings, Dr. Page Hudson, the North Carolina chief medical examiner, testified that "at least 65, perhaps 80, percent" of the propoxyphene-associated deaths in his jurisdiction were suicides. Our analysis of data available to us led us to a similar conclusion.

The 1975 Finkle study found that 42 percent of propoxyphene-related deaths also involved alcohol (both DAWN and the Finkle study confirm that concomitant ingestion of other drugs and/or alcohol characterizes about 80 percent of total propoxyphene cases). Those who abuse alcohol constitute one of the most suicide-prone populations. A large number of the decedents in the Finkle study had a prior history of "emotional problems" (nearly 82 percent), and many were under psychiatric treatment at the time of death. There were even fifty propoxyphene-associated deaths officially