



Increased Use of Amphetamines Linked to Rising Workplace Drug Use, According to Quest Diagnostics' 2003 Drug Testing Index

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- Opiate Use Increases Noticeably -

TETERBORO, N.J., Jul 22, 2004 /PRNewswire-FirstCall via COMTEX/ -- Increased use of amphetamines among general U.S. workforce employees was linked to rising workplace drug use during 2003, according to the semi-annual Drug Testing Index(R), released today by Quest Diagnostics Incorporated (NYSE: DGX), the leading provider of employer drug testing services in the United States.

Overall, the drug positivity rate increased to 4.5% in 2003 from 4.4% a year earlier for the combined U.S. workforce. The positivity rate is the number of positive test results compared to the total number of drug tests performed by Quest Diagnostics. Quest Diagnostics performed more than 7.1 million drug tests from January to December 2003.

The Drug Testing Index is released every six months as a service for government, media and industry, and has been considered a benchmark for national trends since its inception in 1988. The 2003 Drug Testing Index summarizes the results of workplace drug tests performed by Quest Diagnostics between January and December. It examines positivity rates among three major testing populations: federally-mandated, safety-sensitive workers; the general workforce; and the combined U.S. workforce. Federally-mandated, safety-sensitive workers include pilots, bus and truck drivers and workers in nuclear power plants, for whom routine drug testing is mandated by the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

Among general U.S. workforce employees, the incidence of positive drug tests attributed to amphetamines rose by more than 44% in 2003 from 2002, reaching 0.49% of all drug tests that look for amphetamines among this group of workers. During 2002 amphetamines positivity was 0.34%. Growth in amphetamines use during this period represents the largest single-year surge in amphetamines use documented by the Drug Testing Index during the past five years. Prior year-over-year increases have been significantly smaller between 14% and 17%.

Drug test data suggest that greater use of methamphetamine among a large group of general U.S. workforce employees during 2003 may have caused the increase in amphetamines use overall. For this group of workers, the incidence of positive drug tests attributed to methamphetamine increased by more than 68% in 2003 from 2002, reaching 0.32% of all positive drug tests. During 2002 methamphetamine positivity was 0.19%.

Methamphetamine, a type of amphetamine, is a potent synthetic psychostimulant drug, most frequently produced clandestinely in the United States.(1) Methamphetamine production is increasing both in the United States and in the foreign source areas that supply U.S. markets, according to the National Drug Intelligence Center's National Drug Threat Assessment for 2003. The threat posed by methamphetamines will increase over the next year, as a result of rising availability of methamphetamines in drug markets in the eastern states, the growing number of states reporting the presence of laboratories that produce methamphetamine, rising drug purity levels, and apparent increase in the presence of 'ice methamphetamine,' a highly pure and addictive form of methamphetamine.(2)

Amphetamines are used by individuals to increase alertness, relieve fatigue, feel stronger and more decisive. Stimulants are also used for euphoric effects or to counteract the "down" feeling of tranquilizers or alcohol. Possible side effects of stimulants include increased heart and respiratory rates, elevated blood pressure, dilated pupils and decreased appetite; high doses may cause rapid or irregular heartbeat, loss of coordination or collapse. Indications of possible misuse may include excessive activity, talkativeness, irritability, argumentativeness or nervousness.(3)

In addition to growing amphetamines use, the incidence of positive drug tests attributed to opiates also grew noticeably in 2003, climbing by more than 25% from 2002 among general U.S. workforce employees. During 2003, opiate positivity was 0.34% of all drug tests that look for opiates; in 2002, opiate positivity was 0.27%. The 2003 swing in opiate positivity marked the single largest year-over-year change in opiate use among this group of workers since 1999.

The 2003 upturn in opiate positivity was driven by the growing use of morphine, a type of opiate, among a large group of general U.S. workforce employees during 2003. For this group of workers, the incidence of positive tests attributed to morphine use increased by more than 80% in 2003 from 2002, reaching 0.18% of drug tests that look for opiates. During 2002 morphine positivity was 0.10%.

Opiates, which are a group of drugs used medically to relieve pain, also have high potential for dependency and abuse. Examples of commercially available prescription pain relievers include Tylenol with Codeine(R), Vicodin(R) and Percocet(R). Opiate dependency is likely if a person is a frequent user of the drug or even uses it occasionally over a long period of time.(4)

"Over one year the Drug Testing Index uncovered a dramatic increase in methamphetamine use among workers, a finding which is consistent with government reports about clandestine methamphetamine production and widespread access," said Barry Sample, Ph.D., Director of Science and Technology for Quest Diagnostics' Employer Solutions division. "Amphetamines use among general U.S. workforce employees reached an unprecedented high and grew at an annual rate that we had not seen before. Opiate positivity was also noteworthy, particularly when compared to unremarkable year-over-year changes from prior years."

Among federally-mandated, safety-sensitive workers, amphetamines use in 2003 remained relatively unchanged from 2002. Amphetamines positivity increased slightly to 0.29% of all drug tests that look for amphetamines between January and December 2003, from 0.28% between January and December 2002.

In 2003 the drug positivity rate for federally-mandated, safety-sensitive workers remained unchanged at 2.5% from 2002. For general U.S. workforce employees, the drug positivity rate, increased to 5.0% in 2003 from 4.8% in 2002, driven by growing amphetamines use among this group of employees.

Color graphics of the Drug Testing Index, including regional maps which show positivity rates by type of drug, are available online at <http://www.questdiagnostics.com> to provide more localized workplace drug test data.

Quest Diagnostics Incorporated is the nation's leading provider of diagnostic testing, information and services, providing insights that enable healthcare professionals to make decisions that improve health. The company offers the broadest access to diagnostic testing services through its national network of laboratories and patient service centers, and provides interpretive consultation through its extensive medical and scientific staff. Quest Diagnostics is the leading provider of esoteric testing, including gene-based medical testing, and provides advanced information technology solutions to improve patient care. Additional company information is available at: <http://www.questdiagnostics.com>.

- (1) Source: Statement of Karen P. Tandy, Administrator, Drug Enforcement Administration Before the United States House of Representatives, Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee for the Departments of Commerce, Justice, State, The Judiciary and Related Agencies, March 24, 2004.
- (2) Source: National Drug Intelligence Center, "National Drug Threat Assessment 2003: Methamphetamine," January 2003, <http://www.usdoj.gov/ndic/pubs3/3300/meth.htm>
- (3) Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, Drug Category Profile: Stimulants, <http://ncadi.samhsa.gov/govpubs/rpo926/>
- (4) Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse, "Heroin and Other Opiates," 1986, <http://www.well.com/user/woa/fsheroi.htm>

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Annual Positivity Rates

(For Combined U.S. Workforce)
(More than 7.1 million tests from January to December 2003)

Year	Drug Positive Rate
1988	13.6 %
1989	12.7 %
1990	11.0 %
1991	8.8 %
1992	8.8 %
1993	8.4 %
1994	7.5 %
1995	6.7 %
1996	5.8 %
1997	5.0 %
1998	4.8 %
1999	4.6 %
2000	4.7 %
2001	4.6 %
2002	4.4 %
2003	4.5 %

Positivity Rates By Testing Category

Testing Category	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
Federally Mandated, Safety-Sensitive Workforce	2.5 %	2.5 %	2.9 %	3.1 %	3.2 %
General U.S. Workforce	5.0 %	4.8 %	4.9 %	4.9 %	4.8 %
Combined U.S. Workforce	4.5 %	4.4 %	4.6 %	4.7 %	4.6 %

Positivity Rates By Testing Reason

(For Federally-Mandated, Safety-Sensitive Workforce)
(More than 1.2 million tests from January to December 2003)

Testing Reason	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
For Cause	13.8 %	14.3 %	14.4 %	14.8 %	14.0 %

Periodic	0.75 %	0.95 %	1.1 %	1.1 %	1.1 %
Post-Accident	3.1 %	3.3 %	3.6 %	3.9 %	3.7 %
Pre-Employment	2.9 %	2.9 %	3.4 %	3.6 %	3.7 %
Random	1.9 %	1.9 %	2.2 %	2.4 %	2.6 %
Returned to Duty	2.8 %	3.4 %	3.5 %	3.8 %	4.4 %

Positivity Rates By Testing Reason
(For General U.S. Workforce)
(More than 5.9 million tests from January to December 2003)

Testing Reason	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
For Cause	28.2 %	25.9 %	26.1 %	25.7 %	24.7 %
Periodic	2.2 %	2.7 %	3.4 %	4.4 %	4.5 %
Post-Accident	5.7 %	5.9 %	6.0 %	5.9 %	5.6 %
Pre-Employment	4.1 %	4.3 %	4.4 %	4.5 %	4.5 %
Random	6.6 %	6.5 %	7.0 %	7.7 %	6.9 %
Returned to Duty	5.6 %	5.6 %	5.3 %	5.3 %	5.5 %

Positivity Rates By Drug Category
(For Federally-Mandated, Safety-Sensitive Workforce,
as a percentage of all such tests)
(More than 1.2 million tests from January to December 2003)

Drug Category	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
Amphetamines	0.29 %	0.28 %	0.29 %	0.27 %	0.26 %
Cocaine	0.59 %	0.56 %	0.60 %	0.64 %	0.71 %
Marijuana	1.34 %	1.44 %	1.72 %	1.92 %	1.86 %
Opiates	0.19 %	0.19 %	0.26 %	0.25 %	0.27 %
PCP	0.04 %	0.04 %	0.05 %	0.06 %	0.05 %
Oxidizing Adulterants (incl. Nitrites)	0.03 %	0.05 %	0.05 %	0.10 %	0.21 %
Substitution	0.06 %	0.05 %	0.02 %	0.03 %	0.03 %

Positivity Rates By Drug Category
(For General U.S. Workforce, as a percentage of all such tests)
(More than 5.9 million tests from January to December 2003)

Drug Category	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
Amphetamines	0.49 %	0.34 %	0.29 %	0.25 %	0.22 %
Barbiturates	0.29 %	0.30 %	0.34 %	0.38 %	0.44 %
Benzodiazepines	0.60 %	0.58 %	0.60 %	0.55 %	0.50 %
Cocaine	0.74 %	0.71 %	0.69 %	0.73 %	0.80 %
Marijuana	2.96 %	2.98 %	3.17 %	3.29 %	3.17 %
Methadone	0.20 %	0.16 %	0.13 %	0.13 %	0.08 %
Opiates	0.34 %	0.27 %	0.29 %	0.27 %	0.26 %
PCP	0.03 %	0.02 %	0.02 %	0.02 %	0.02 %
Propoxyphene	0.67 %	0.73 %	0.52 %	0.36 %	0.33 %
Oxidizing Adulterants (incl. Nitrites)	0.02 %	0.05 %	0.05 %	0.10 %	0.23 %
Substitution	0.03 %	0.03 %	0.03 %	0.03 %	0.04 %

Positivity Rates By Drug Category
(For Federally-Mandated, Safety-Sensitive Workers,
as a Percentage of All Positives)
(More than 1.2 million tests from January to December 2003)

Drug Category	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
Acid/Base	0.37 %	0.45 %	0.32 %	0.16 %	0.46 %

Amphetamines	11.4 %	10.8 %	9.6 %	8.3 %	7.7 %
Cocaine	22.7 %	21.1 %	20.0 %	19.6 %	21.2 %
Marijuana	53.6 %	56.0 %	58.3 %	60.2 %	56.9 %
Opiates	7.4 %	7.3 %	8.5 %	7.8 %	8.0 %
Oxidizing Adulterants (incl. Nitrites)	0.52 %	0.90 %	0.82 %	1.4 %	3.1 %
PCP	1.7 %	1.5 %	1.7 %	1.7 %	1.6 %
Substituted	2.3 %	1.9 %	0.77 %	0.77 %	0.96 %

Positivity Rates By Drug Category
(For General U.S. Workforce, as a Percentage of All Positives)
(More than 5.9 million tests from January to December 2003)

Drug Category	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
Acid/Base	0.16 %	0.25 %	0.23 %	0.07 %	0.14 %
Amphetamines	9.0 %	6.7 %	5.5 %	4.8 %	4.3 %
Barbiturates	2.8 %	2.9 %	3.2 %	3.5 %	3.7 %
Benzodiazepines	5.1 %	5.0 %	5.0 %	4.2 %	3.3 %
Cocaine	13.8 %	13.9 %	13.2 %	13.9 %	15.8 %
Marijuana	55.0 %	57.7 %	60.9 %	63.0 %	62.6 %
Methadone	1.6 %	1.2 %	0.98 %	0.89 %	0.45 %
Methaqualone	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %
Opiates	6.3 %	5.3 %	5.5 %	5.2 %	5.1 %
Oxidizing Adulterants (incl. Nitrites)	0.16 %	0.48 %	0.51 %	0.88 %	1.6 %
PCP	0.51 %	0.47 %	0.46 %	0.45 %	0.35 %
Propoxyphene	5.0 %	5.6 %	4.0 %	2.5 %	2.0 %
Substituted	0.58 %	0.54 %	0.48 %	0.56 %	0.80 %

Positivity Rates By Drug Category
(For Combined U.S. Workforce, as a Percentage of All Positives)
(More than 7.1 million tests from January to December 2003)

Drug Category	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999
Acid/Base	0.18 %	0.27 %	0.24 %	0.08 %	0.16 %
Amphetamines	9.3 %	7.1 %	5.9 %	5.1 %	4.5 %
Barbiturates	2.5 %	2.6 %	2.9 %	3.2 %	3.4 %
Benzodiazepines	4.7 %	4.5 %	4.5 %	3.9 %	3.1 %
Cocaine	14.6 %	14.6 %	13.9 %	14.4 %	16.2 %
Marijuana	54.9 %	57.6 %	60.6 %	62.8 %	62.2 %
Methadone	1.4 %	1.1 %	0.88 %	0.82 %	0.42 %
Methaqualone	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %	0.00 %
Opiates	6.4 %	5.5 %	5.8 %	5.4 %	5.3 %
Oxidizing Adulterants (incl. Nitrites)	0.19 %	0.52 %	0.54 %	0.92 %	1.7 %
PCP	0.61 %	0.58 %	0.59 %	0.56 %	0.44 %
Propoxyphene	4.5 %	5.1 %	3.5 %	2.3 %	1.8 %
Substituted	0.73 %	0.68 %	0.51 %	0.58 %	0.81 %

SOURCE Quest Diagnostics

Investors - Laure Park, +1-201-393-5030; or Media - Jennifer Somers, +1-201-393-5700, both of Quest Diagnostics

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