

and becoming the doctor of choice for pill mills or illegal users of drugs as a way to fund their own habits.

When I first heard these stories, I was shocked. My friend told me that doctors are people just like you and me, and suffer from the same stresses and illnesses as everyone else. According to the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, in November 2012 there were 397,130 primary care physicians and 437,639 specialist physicians, for a total of 834,769 total physicians in the United States.<sup>26</sup> According to the National Council on Alcohol and Drug Dependence (NCADD), 1 in 12 adults (8.5%) suffer from alcohol abuse or dependence, and 8% have used an illegal drug in the past 30 days.<sup>27</sup> Even if these were the same people, and the percentages applied to physicians, that means we have between 66,782 and 70,955 physicians who suffer from alcohol abuse or dependence or have used an illegal drug in the past 30 days. The more the state medical boards test for fitness or good professional character, the faster these doctors with issues can get help and the safer their patients will be from malpractice. The ones that slip through the cracks will be the ones that the DEA and state departments of public safety will have to catch!

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## **SUMMARY**

There are several agencies that are responsible for various aspects of the pharmaceutical drug supply chain. The FDA is responsible for protecting the public health by ensuring the safety, efficacy, and security of human drugs (among other responsibilities). The FDA is also responsible for advancing the public health through accelerating innovations that make medicines more effective, safer, and more affordable. With this mission, the FDA is defining the regulations as required with the Drug Quality and Security Act. The DEA enforces the controlled substances laws and regulations of the United States. In my opinion, the DEA is understaffed and underfunded to enforce these laws, bring the criminals to justice, and perform the preventive tasks as outlined in its stated mission. The state boards of pharmacy regulate pharmacists. The state departments of public safety fill in the gaps at the local level and enforce all federal and state laws regarding the manufacture, transport, warehouse, delivery, and dispensing of pharmaceutical drugs. The state medical boards regulate the doctors writing the prescriptions. This is no trivial task! There are other agencies