Tennessee Lax Laws

1. **General Purpose**: To persuade
2. **Specific Purpose**: To persuade my audience that the five main types of laxatives should be behind the counter drugs instead of over the counter drugs, as they are currently.
3. **Central Idea/Thesis Sentence**: The five most commonly used and sold types of laxatives (bulk-forming, lubricant, stool softening, osmotic, and stimulant) should be moved from over the counter (OTC) to behind the counter (BTC) status drugs in Tennessee.
4. **Introduction (Attention)**: I’m sure everyone in this room has, at one point in time, looked in the mirror and wished they could change a part of their physical appearance. Whether you’re insecure about the size of your nose or the fact that one of your kneecaps has a weird scar on it, it’s completely natural to be overly critical of your physical appearance. According to **Kate Fox,** **in a summary of research findings on body image by the Social Issues Research Centre in 1997**, up to 8 out of 10 women will be dissatisfied with their reflection, and more than half may see a distorted image. They report that in one American survey, 81% of ten-year-old girls had already dieted at least once. A recent Swedish study found that 25% of 7-year-old girls had dieted to lose weight – they were already suffering from 'body-image distortion', estimating themselves to be larger than they really were. Similar studies in Japan have found that 41% of elementary school girls (some as young as 6) thought they were too fat. Even normal-weight and underweight girls want to lose weight. Where these thoughts become harmful, however, is when they begin to drive actions. This often comes in the form of abuse of widely available, over-the-counter drugs and supplements such as laxatives. The five most used types of laxatives, bulk-forming, lubricant, stool softening, osmotic, and stimulant, are not medically recommended for healthy weight control and are especially susceptible to abuse, and their misuse can result in serious health consequences. Thus, these should be moved from over the counter (OTC) to behind the counter (BTC) status drugs in Tennessee.

*[ I’m sure this is the first time many of you are hearing about this, as it’s not something that’s romanticized or even commonly discussed in our everyday lives. So how prevalent of an issue is it really?* *]*

1. **Body**:
2. Need (Problem)
   1. In **Hudson, et. al from 2007 in their study on the prevalence on eating disorders,** concluded that eating disorders **“**represent a public health concern because they are frequently associated with other psychopathology and role impairment, and are frequently under-treated. Less than half of individuals with bulimia nervosa or binge eating disorder had ever sought treatment for their eating disorder.”
   2. Additionally, they report that the National Comorbidity Survey Replication, a nationally representative study of US households conducted by Harvard University, found that 50% of people with bulimia nervosa, a disorder often associated with abuse of laxatives and diet pills, develop the illness by the age of 18.
   3. Among US adolescents, 6% of girls and 4% of boys reported past-month use of laxatives without physician advice. But what does that really mean?
      1. Serious health consequences can result from abuse of laxatives
         1. These include acute and chronic impairment of gastrointestinal and cardiovascular systems, sometimes resulting in death.
         2. Adverse effects include dehydration, chronic diarrhea and constipation, metabolic acidosis, hypokalemia, and other fluid and electrolyte disorders; cardiac arrhythmia; ischemic stroke; and hepatic and renal failure.
         3. Any and all of that can result from the over and misuse of laxatives. And yet, anyone at any age can buy as many laxatives as they want from basically any store that sells medicines. You don’t need any kind of identification or prescription.

*[ Here are a few things that are being done currently. These are all great ways to perhaps slow down the misuse of laxatives, but the fact of the matter is that without proper legislation in Tennessee regarding the issue, the statistics aren’t going anywhere. This is where my proposed solution comes into play. ]*

1. Satisfaction (Solution)
   1. A specific method would be to implement a law in Tennessee that requires that laxatives be sold from behind the counter in all retail establishments and pharmacies to prohibit the purchase of large quantities at a time, especially by those who intend to misuse them.
      1. According to **Sujit Sansgiry, a licensed pharmacist**, in an article from the **Integrated Pharmacy Research & Practice journal in 2016** said*,* abuse of any over the counter drug is extremely common, due to self and misdiagnoses, even when one is not planning on using the drug for any other purpose than what it is intended for.
         1. When mental illnesses and disorders, like eating disorders, come into play, though, the danger is exponentially higher, **Archita Bhansali, another licensed pharmacist**, reports in the same article.
   2. My proposed new law would simply require that in Tennessee, laxatives be moved to a behind the counter classification, as opposed to the over the counter classification where they currently preside.
      1. This could be combined with an age restriction to limit the quantity purchasable by minors as well.
         1. As **Pomeranz, et. al. report in 2013,** behind-the-counter placement could encourage pharmacists to consult or allow age verification.
            1. Retailers of all types are already required by the FDA to keep certain products behind the counter. Restricting direct access to products that have potential public health ramifications is a common feature of the US, such as the case of prescription drugs, tobacco, and alcohol.
         2. Extending these same, or even just similar, requirements for laxatives would be extremely beneficial in slowing the abuse statistics.
         3. Although this would not prevent consumers from purchasing many small quantities from several establishments, such a restriction could assist in deterring consumption and would relay the message that consuming large quantities of laxatives is harmful to one’s health and could have serious short- and long-term consequences.
         4. The revised location of the five most common types of laxatives would impact only people at risk for abusing them and not those consumers who would purchase the proper amount for the medically indicated use.

*[ If implemented, Tennessee would be the first state to take such a huge first step in deterring those with eating disorders from mis and overusing laxatives and other weight loss products ]*

1. Visualization (Benefits)
   1. No other state has put this law into effect.
   2. However, in California, a law was recently passed that prohibits middle and high school sports coaches from suggesting or requiring weight loss drugs, such as diet pills and laxatives, to be taken to control the weights and BMI’s of their players.
   3. Similar laws to my proposed one have been put in place in many states, though, when it comes to the drug ipecac.
      1. In case you’re not aware of what ipecac is, it’s a medicine that causes vomiting.
      2. In the past it was used to partially empty a person’s stomach after ingesting poison.
         1. It is now rarely recommended, according to the **National Capitol Poison Center**.
   4. Laxatives would be treated and kept like tobacco products in stores where you are required to show your ID to buy them and you’d only be able to buy a certain amount, in order to keep them out of the hands of those who are most likely to abuse them, adolescents with eating disorders.
      1. Think of it as how the emergency contraceptive Plan B is sold behind the counter.

*[ Of course, as opinionated and passionate as many of us are about many issues, none of us are Tennessee legislators or lawmakers… yet. ]*

1. **Conclusion** **(Call to Action):** So, what can you do in the meantime? Call and write our local and state-level representation about the issue. Talk to your friends and family members, educate them, and urge them to do the same. We need to eliminate the stigma that surrounds the topic so those that are struggling can get the help they need before it’s too late. Make it known that eating disorders are serious issues that affect Tennessee’s youth, and the lack of legislation regarding them is an egregious system failure. Without us pushing our representatives to do something about laxative abuse, change will not happen at any level, and those that *need* these regulations to be put in place for their health will continue to suffer silently. Change starts here; it’s time that we *demand* better.

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