Vermont Prescription Monitoring System

Quarterly Report
4th Quarter 2023

January 2024

VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

What is the Vermont Prescription Monitoring System?

The Vermont Prescription Monitoring System (VPMS) is a statewide, electronic database of controlled substance prescriptions dispensed by Vermont-licensed pharmacies.

- VPMS is a clinical tool to promote appropriate prescribing, while deterring the misuse, abuse, and diversion of controlled substances.

- VPMS is also a surveillance tool that is used to monitor statewide trends in the dispensing of controlled substances.

VPMS Quarterly Report Data Inclusions

This report summarizes VPMS data for all Schedule II – IV prescriptions that were dispensed by Vermont-licensed pharmacies between 10/1/2023 and 12/31/2023.

The drug types included in this report are:

- **Opioid Analgesic** – opioids used to treat pain
- **Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD)** – opioids used to treat opioid use disorder
- **Benzodiazepines** – sedatives used for anxiety, insomnia and other conditions
- **Stimulants** - medication used to increase alertness, attention, energy

Vermont-licensed pharmacies that are located out of state and that mail prescriptions into Vermont are also required to submit these prescription data to VPMS.

Prescriptions for opioid use disorder treatment provided at a physician's office, sometimes called a "spoke," are dispensed at a pharmacy and are included in VPMS data.

VPMS Quarterly Report Data Exclusions

VPMS **does not** collect data on prescriptions dispensed by:

- Emergency rooms

- Veterinarian offices

- Opioid Treatment Programs (OTPs) that dispense methadone and buprenorphine for opioid addiction, sometimes called a "hub'.

- Pharmacies not licensed in Vermont, such as those in New Hampshire or Massachusetts. Vermont residents can and do pick up prescriptions from these pharmacies and this data is not in VPMS.

- MOUD opioids dispensed in correctional facility settings.

Some prescriptions may not be included on this report if there were delays in data submission. Final data is reconciled in the Annual Report totals.

Data submitted to VPMS by pharmacies can contain errors. Each data upload is screened for errors and sent back to the pharmacy to be corrected if errors are discovered. However, not all errors are found or corrected.

VPMS data is on prescriptions dispensed. The VPMS does not contain information about if a medication was prescribed but not filled, the associated diagnosis, instructions, or how a prescribed medication is used once it has been picked up.

Why does this report use Morphine Milligram Equivalents (MME) to measure opioid prescriptions?

Using Morphine Milligram Equivalents (MME) allows for comparison between types and strengths of opioids.

MME is a way to express the strength of an opioid analgesic prescription as though the prescription were converted to morphine.

For instance, the following medications each provide 50 MME/day:

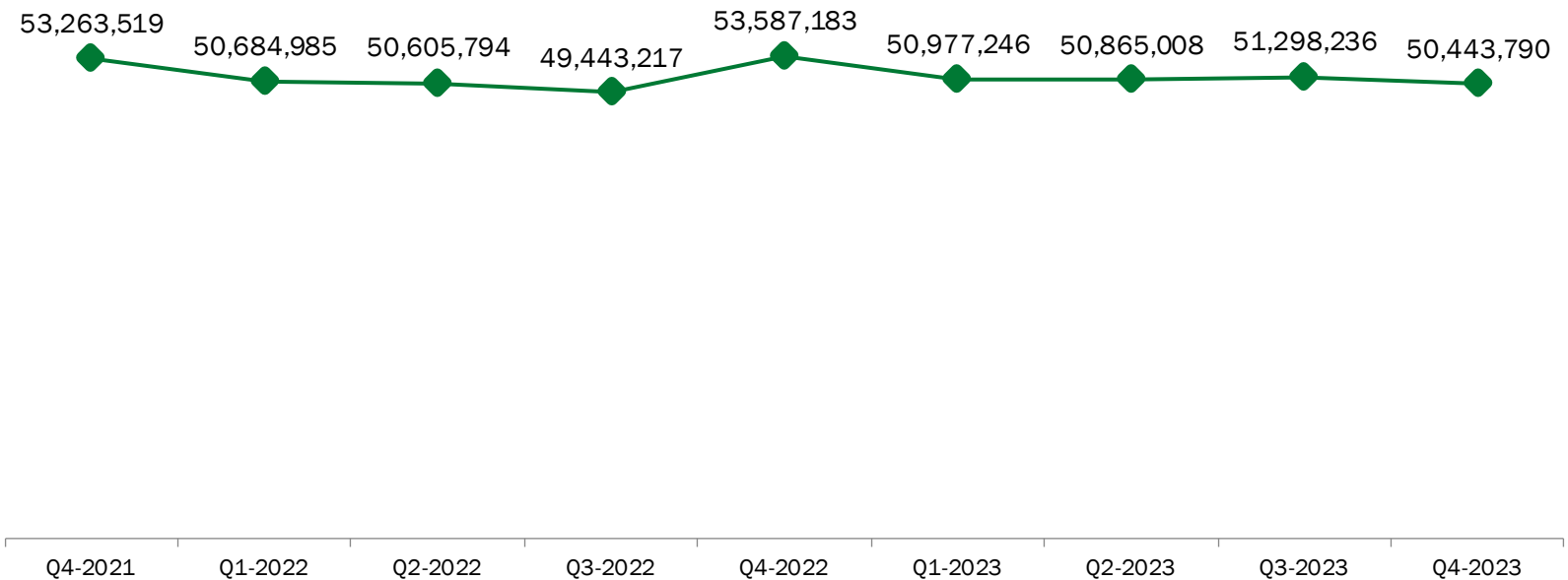- 10 tablets of hydrocodone/acetaminophen 5/300
- 2 tablets of oxycodone sustained-release 15 mg
- <3 tablets of methadone 5 mg

Note on Quarter 4, 2022 : The number of analgesic opioid prescriptions for which an MME can be calculated increased as of this quarter due to data quality improvements. The increase in total MME dispensed can be attributed to this change rather than an increase in prescribing trends.

The total amount of opioid analgesics dispensed has stabilized

Vermont Total MME Dispensed by Quarter

* See note on slide 5 for more information on the increase in total MME for 2022 Quarter 4 as compared to previous quarters.

Quarter	Total MME
Q4-2021	53,263,519
Q1-2022	50,684,985
Q2-2022	50,605,794
Q3-2022	49,443,217
Q4-2022	53,587,183
Q1-2023	50,977,246
Q2-2023	50,865,008
Q3-2023	51,298,236
Q4-2023	50,443,790

Q1: January-March   Q2: April-June   Q3: July-September   Q4: October-December

The percent of Vermonters receiving at least one opioid prescription has remained relatively stable over the past two years

Percent of Vermont Population Receiving at Least One Opioid Analgesic Prescription by Quarter

Q4-2021	Q1-2022	Q2-2022	Q3-2022	Q4-2022	Q1-2023	Q2-2023	Q3-2023	Q4-2023
3.8%	3.7%	3.8%	3.6%	3.8%	3.8%	3.8%	3.7%	3.7%
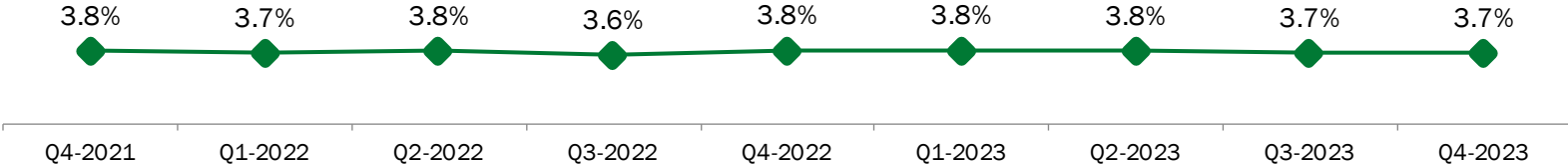
Q1: January-March   Q2: April-June   Q3: July-September   Q4: October-December

The average daily MME has remained stable over the past two years

Vermont Average Daily MME Per Prescription by Quarter

	Q4-2021	Q1-2022	Q2-2022	Q3-2022	Q4-2022	Q1-2023	Q2-2023	Q3-2023	Q4-2023
MME	52.6	52.3	51.4	50.1	51.2	50.4	50.0	50.3	51.0
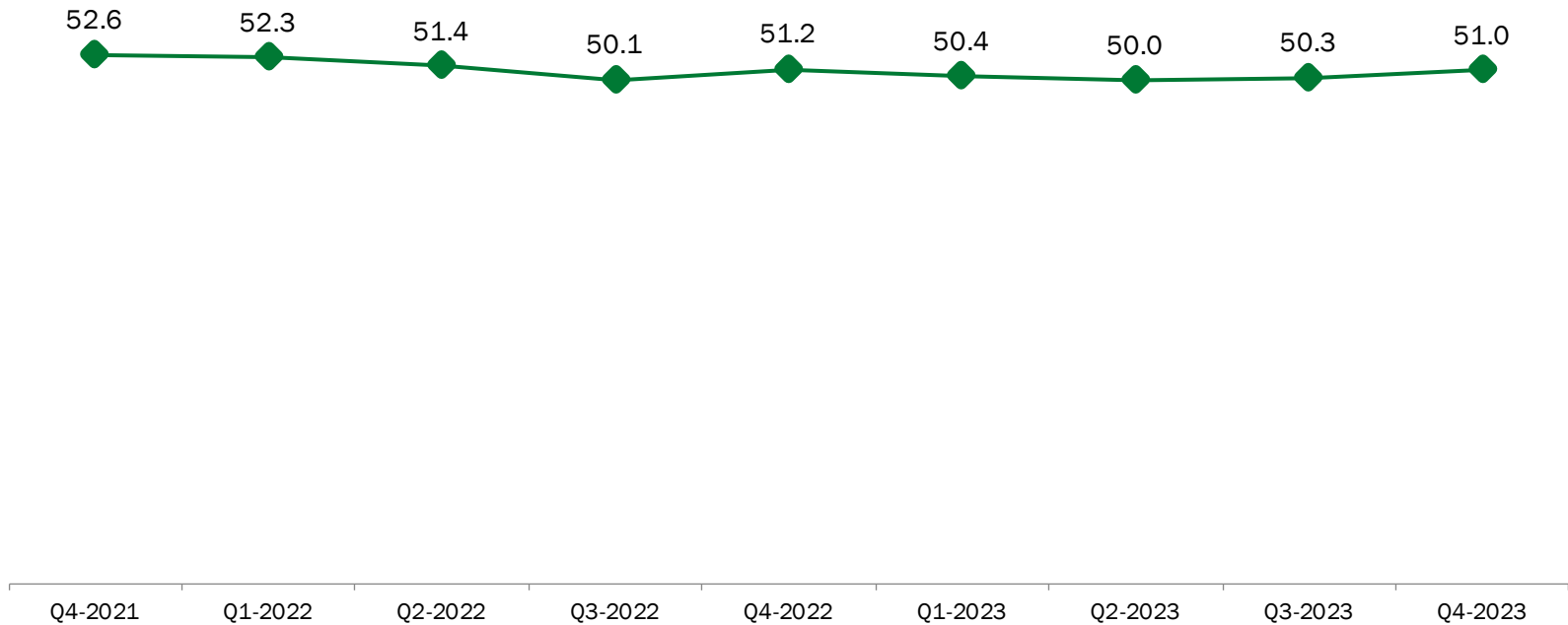
Q1: January-March   Q2: April-June   Q3: July-September   Q4: October-December

# The percent of the population receiving at least one prescription varies by county

Percent of Population Receiving At Least One Prescription in Drug Class, October - December 2023

	OPIOID ANALGESIC	MOUD	BENZODIAZEPINE	STIMULANT
ADDISON	3.5%	1.0%	3.4%	3.5%
BENNINGTON	4.0%	1.7%	4.0%	3.9%
CALEDONIA	3.4%	0.8%	3.0%	3.8%
CHITTENDEN	3.0%	0.9%	3.7%	4.0%
ESSEX	2.5%	0.6%	2.2%	1.8%
FRANKLIN	4.2%	2.0%	3.0%	2.6%
GRAND ISLE	3.9%	1.5%	3.1%	3.0%
LAMOILLE	4.0%	1.3%	3.8%	3.4%
ORANGE	3.0%	1.1%	3.1%	2.7%
ORLEANS	4.4%	1.2%	4.5%	4.1%
RUTLAND	4.3%	1.6%	4.2%	3.6%
WASHINGTON	3.6%	0.9%	4.0%	4.1%
WINDHAM	3.5%	0.8%	4.0%	4.4%
WINDSOR	2.4%	0.8%	2.6%	2.3%
Vermont	3.7%	1.1%	3.8%	3.9%

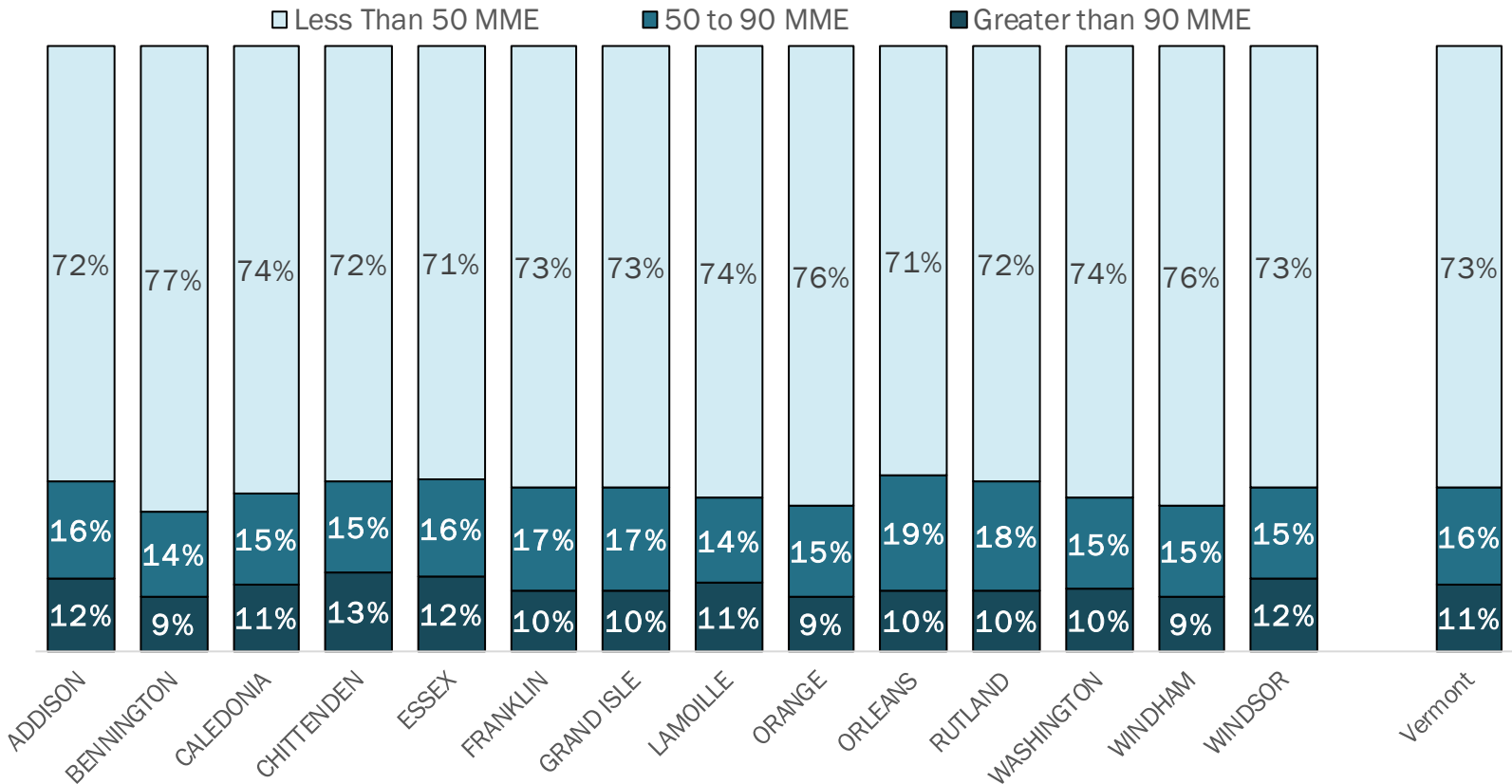# The average daily MME varies more widely by county than the days supply

Average Days' Supply and Daily Morphine Milligram Equivalent (MME) for Opioid Analgesics, October - December 2023

■ Average Days Supply   ■ Average MME
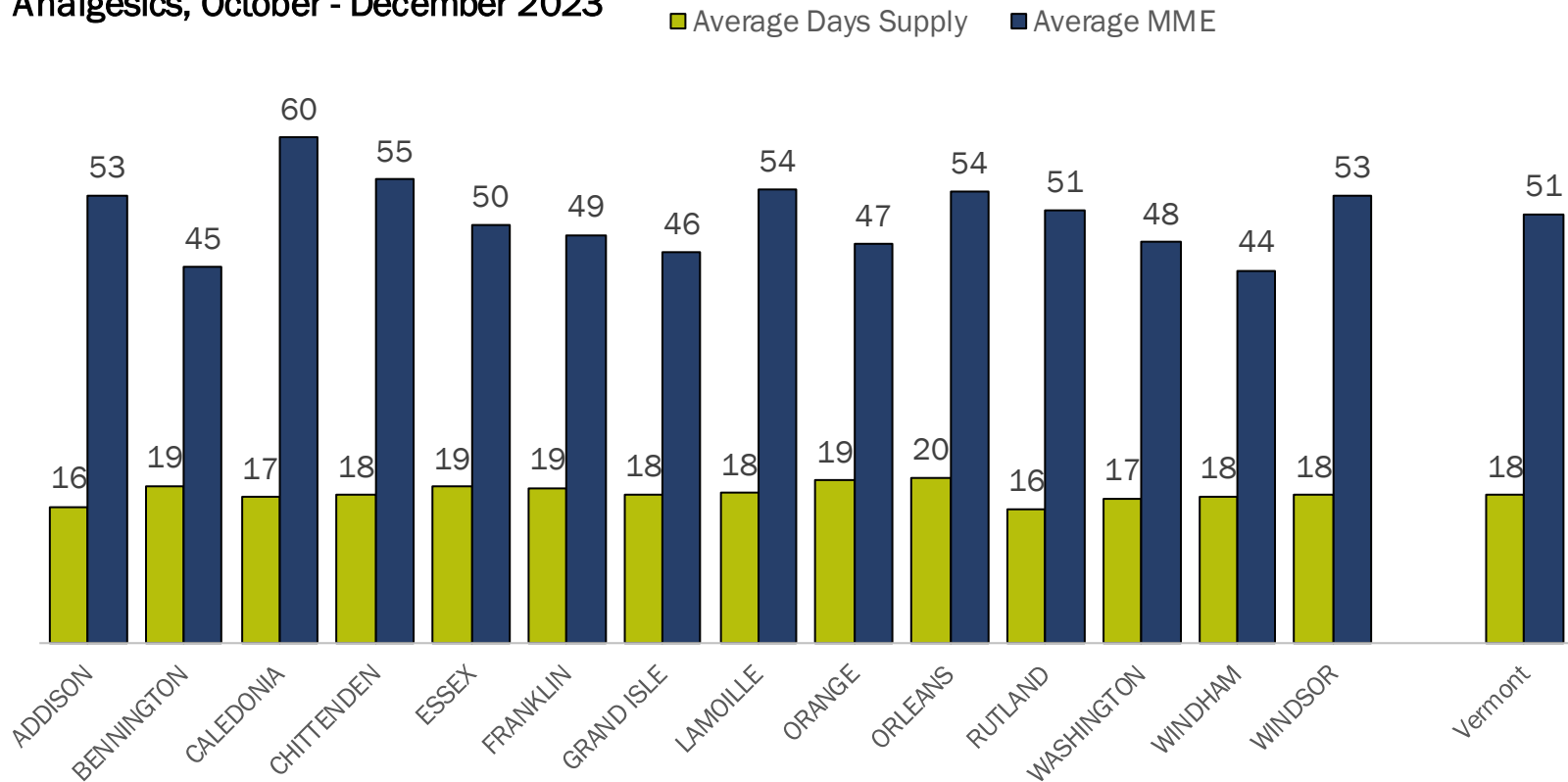
Days Supply – the estimated number of days that the medication will last*

Most prescriptions in all counties are fewer than 50 MME, but there is variability among counties

Proportion of Opioid Analgesic Prescriptions in Daily Morphine Milligram Equivalent (MME) Categories, October - December 2023

Legend: ☐ Less Than 50 MME   ■ 50 to 90 MME   ■ Greater than 90 MME

County	Less Than 50 MME	50 to 90 MME	Greater than 90 MME
ADDISON	72%	16%	12%
BENNINGTON	77%	14%	9%
CALEDONIA	74%	15%	11%
CHITTENDEN	72%	15%	13%
ESSEX	71%	16%	12%
FRANKLIN	73%	17%	10%
GRAND ISLE	73%	17%	10%
LAMOILLE	74%	14%	11%
ORANGE	76%	15%	9%
ORLEANS	71%	19%	10%
RUTLAND	72%	18%	10%
WASHINGTON	74%	15%	10%
WINDHAM	76%	15%	9%
WINDSOR	73%	15%	12%
Vermont	73%	16%	11%

The rate of prescriptions per 100 residents varies widely by drug class and by county

Rate of Prescriptions Per 100 Residents by Drug Class, October - December 2023

Legend: ■ OPIOID ANALGESIC ■ MOUD ■ BENZODIAZEPINE ■ STIMULANT

County	Opioid Analgesic	MOUD	Benzodiazepine	Stimulant
ADDISON	8.3	5.8	6.7	10.1
BENNINGTON	9.2	9.0	8.5	11.5
CALEDONIA	8.7	4.3	6.4	11.7
CHITTENDEN	7.5	4.9	7.2	11.5
ESSEX	6.6	3.3	4.3	5.5
FRANKLIN	11.4	12.8	6.5	8.4
GRAND ISLE	9.1	8.5	5.9	8.9
LAMOILLE	10.2	7.1	7.4	10.1
ORANGE	7.2	4.3	6.6	8.0
ORLEANS	11.5	7.1	9.5	13.0
RUTLAND	10.8	8.7	9.3	11.0
WASHINGTON	8.5	4.7	8.6	11.8
WINDHAM	8.3	4.6	8.5	12.6
WINDSOR	5.9	4.1	5.5	6.8
Vermont	9.1	6.3	7.8	11.3

The number of prescriptions in each drug class varies widely

Number of Prescriptions in Each Drug Class, October - December 2023

	OPIOID ANALGESIC	MOUD	BENZODIAZEPINE	STIMULANT
ADDISON	3,121	2,174	2,501	3,812
BENNINGTON	3,440	3,366	3,160	4,312
CALEDONIA	2,661	1,310	1,942	3,567
CHITTENDEN	12,659	8,278	12,114	19,458
ESSEX	396	195	259	327
FRANKLIN	5,758	6,512	3,280	4,243
GRAND ISLE	681	636	442	665
LAMOILLE	2,653	1,854	1,936	2,637
ORANGE	2,142	1,289	1,975	2,401
ORLEANS	3,182	1,956	2,630	3,593
RUTLAND	6,522	5,249	5,627	6,663
WASHINGTON	5,114	2,797	5,145	7,109
WINDHAM	3,812	2,093	3,901	5,771
WINDSOR	3,433	2,380	3,197	3,936
Vermont	58,749	41,063	50,437	73,420

*County totals may not add up to the Vermont total; in some instances, county information is not available.

Contact VPMS

❑ Data-related questions can be directed to the VPMS Program Analyst, Lela Kretzer, at:

Lela.Kretzer@vermont.gov

❑ Programmatic questions can be directed to the VPMS Manager, Hannah Hauser, at:

Hannah.Hauser@vermont.gov

Additional information on VPMS, as well as Quarterly, Annual, and special reports are available at:
https://www.healthvermont.gov/vpms