

The Heroin Epidemic

Initially, young people have no intention of ever using heroin. It is a “dirty” drug. They know that most addicted people “slam” the heroin (intravenous injection) and that “slamming” is an extremely dangerous process. They are aware that heroin addicts are often involved in illegal and degrading activities to get heroin. In the addiction world, heroin addicts who IV the drug are “junkies.”

So, if they know all this, why is there such a heroin epidemic among the young? The answer--- prescription drugs!

Young people won’t experiment with heroin but will experiment with prescription drugs, especially opiates—Codeine, Vicodin, Percocet, OxyContin, etc. They get hooked. Their tolerance grows and they need more of the drug. They become physically dependent and nasty withdrawal symptoms kick in when they can’t get the drugs. They start buying prescription drugs on the streets and that is super expensive.

Now they “need” it, but can’t afford it. What to do? What opiate is much cheaper, can provide a euphoric effect, and stops opiate withdrawal? Heroin! And they aren’t interested in “experimenting” with it. They have an opiate addiction before they ever try heroin.

At least with prescription drugs, you know what you’re getting. The purity levels of heroin have huge fluctuations. And who knows what it’s being cut with (fentanyl, for example). No wonder heroin addicts OD—they don’t know the strength of what they’re taking or what has been added to it.

Last year in Pennsylvania, more people were admitted to drug treatment centers for heroin abuse than any other drug (more than all other opiates combined).

“In 2011-12, for the first time, heroin was the primary drug of use, surpassing alcohol, for those seeking county-funded treatment,” said Diane Rosati, executive director of the Bucks County Drug and Alcohol Commission. “Heroin is not new to the suburbs. But it has become more available, less expensive and more acceptable.”