

Tell Me Why. Heroin - A Community's Respose

Student Preliminary Opinions

How many of you know someone who has tried or is addicted to heroin?

How many of you know of a friend who knows someone who has tried or is addicted to heroin?

Do you think heroin use and addiction is a big problem in our area?

How do you think most people become addicted to opiates like heroin?

Do you think that marijuana is a gateway drug? Meaning that it may lead to the use of other illicit substances.

Does taking prescription pills without a prescription count as taking drugs? Is it as bad as using heroin?

Does anyone know what Carfentamil is? (Elephant tranquilizer, heroin is being laced with this and causing a lot of overdoses)

What do professionals mean when they discuss "sharing needles?" Why is sharing needles so dangerous?

How common do you think Hepatitis C and HIV are in this community?

Does anyone know what Narcan is?

Does anyone know where/how they can acquire Narcan?

Study Guide

Who uses heroin and how did they get addicted in the first place?

It is impossible to define a drug addict these day, anyone can be addicted. People from all walks of life as well as people as young as 13-14 years old are injecting heroin.

In fact, Cambria County is ranked 3rd in overdoses in PA. Very frequently people will become addicted to opiates after an injury or illness when they are prescribed them legally. They later switch from pain pills to heroin because it is cheaper and more accessible.

Injury > Prescribed Opiates > Addiction

All it takes is willpower, is that what you think?

Avoiding becoming addicted to heroin has very little to do with willpower.

Once a person is addicted it often requires more than willpower for them to get clean. It is usually an issue of getting their brain chemistry back on track. Heroin floods the brain with chemicals and disrupts normal, healthy pathways.

Even a person's first trial of heroin can lead to overdose which can lead to death.

Drugs can be laced. This can lead to a person taking a much more potent drug at a much higher dosage than they intended.

If a person does not receive immediate care, respiratory depression and lack of O₂/buildup of CO₂ in the blood will lead to death.

Addiction leads to HIV and Hep C, families issues, increase in violent crime.

DA Callahan: "addicts wake up in the morning and all they have on their mind is where they'll get their next fix." (Stealing, lying, setting up fake drug buys) concern for the elderly if addicts know where they live and that they're sick. Addicts have begun selling to support their own drug addiction. 85% of cases relate to drug/alcohol abuse including DUIs, spousal abuse, stealing, etc.

Withdraw: Flu like, can't control bowels, throwing up, can't sit still

When people share needles it becomes incredibly easy to transmit the Hep C and HIV viruses.

Cambria county has high rates of Hep C and has been flagged as being at very high risk for an "HIV explosion."

Hep C is a virus which primarily affects a patient's liver. HIV is a virus that causes the immune system deteriorate making people more at risk for infections and some cancers.

Is that what you would say, if it was your child?

Narcan contains Naloxone, which is an opioid antagonist. This means that it effectively blocks opioid receptors in the brain. This will "turn off" heroin and will wake up a person who has overdosed. It is important to note that the duration of action of naloxone is not that long, someone who has just been revived with naloxone must seek immediate medical attention as they can crash again when the narcan wears off

Is there any hope?

Four approaches for hope:

Rehabilitation, Replacement Therapy, Prevention, Anti-Drug Coalition

Rehab - There is hope there is help. Rehabs and treatment centers focus on changing maladaptive behaviors associated with addiction (lying, stealing, etc.). The stigma surrounded drug addiction is related to those behavioral changes that come along with a person who is struggling with an addiction problem.

Replacement therapy - Drug addiction is an illness that sometimes requires medication. This treatment gets to the chemical route of the problem. Suboxone and Methadone programs both help people who are recovering from addiction by weaning them slowly off similar substances. They have been shown repeatedly to be effective and communities that have suboxone and methadone clinics tend to have less crime.

Education - This approach for hope targets the young people in our community, aiming to stop people from becoming addicted in the first place. In other words this is a method of prevention. Botvin LifeSkills if delivered with Fidelity has been shown to be effective. The program has been implemented in several school districts. The idea is to inspire students to peer educate, and influence others to make healthy choices.

Anti-Drug Coalition - Together we can accomplish more: community leaders, businesses, health care providers, law enforcement, and treatment providers all work together for a solution. Cambria County drug Coalition <http://www.cambriacountydrugcoalition.org/>

These measures to prevent and treat drug addiction in our community are beginning to appear successful. There was an overall decrease from 2011-2015 in prescription drug use (Cambria county statistics).

What are the indicators of a drug problem in someone you care about?

If there is an addiction what should you do?

- Retreat from activities
- Withdrawal from loved ones/family functions
- Pin pupils
- Dark circles under their eyes
- weird sleep patterns
- Seeming sleepy at odd times of the day

Clean out your medical cabinets, be involved in your children's' lives. Educate yourself, if you see things tell people. Teachers, parents, siblings, get them help. Do not give into peer pressure.

Class Discussion - After Video

Did any of the information in the video surprise you? Why?

Do you think it is a good idea to keep narcan on hand just in case? How do you feel about the use of narcan for people who have had multiple overdoses?

What would you do if you suspect a friend has a drug problem?

What would you tell someone if they offered you drugs at a party?

Do you feel like this issue affects you? How is it relevant to your daily life?

What could you do in your daily life to help your families/friends stay healthy and reduce their risk of getting addicted to opiates?