

HISTORY OF DRUG ABUSE IN THE UNITED STATES

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When I started to shoot heroin in 1967, most addicts were inner-city male minorities who began shooting heroin as their first drug of choice. A young, white female from the suburbs who worked and ran the streets was quite an anomaly. Heroin was not my first drug of choice. My drug career progressed from cigarettes at age 10, to alcohol and pills at 12, then pot at 15, followed by heroin as a 17 year old.

In the 1950's illicit drug use was very popular within the "Beatnik culture", often viewed as a way to enhance creativity of the artists and musicians of that time. It was the beginning of the "Hippie Generation" in the 1960's and their feel good philosophy of Free Love. Drug use was integral to their lifestyle as it reflected a non-conformist attitude, as well as helped to expand their consciousness from ingesting hallucinogens.

This trend continued into the 1970's as recreational drug use was becoming more common, especially with the increase of cocaine availability. Heroin was also becoming more popular.

In the 1980's a new and deadlier form of cocaine was introduced known as "crack" (because of the crackling sound it made when you smoked it). It was a rock form of cocaine that was much cheaper than the powder.

By the 1990's opiate pain medications (Vicodin, Percocet, and OxyContin) were being heavily over-prescribed and abused. As regulations began to tighten, addicts began buying them on the streets at grossly inflated prices. That dilemma is what created the heroin epidemic that we are battling now.

Drugs that are taken for non-medical purposes are generally used to alter our moods, reduce emotional pain and anxiety, increase socialization, or expand our consciousness and have new experiences.

Anyone can get addicted to drugs, but most people don't!

For those who do, the pleasurable experience they get from using is far greater than the pain they experience from not using them. Therefore, they are willing to risk health, legal complications, family, jobs, or their futures in order to continue self-medicating.

Addiction can be defined as seeking drug or alcohol consumption compulsively, despite the harmful and dangerous consequences. It is often accompanied by physical dependence and a need for increasing amounts of the substance to achieve the same effect.

WHAT ARE THE DRUGS WE ABUSE?

Some of the drugs that are frequently abused have been around a long time. The earliest record of using the Cannabis Plant (marijuana) was in Eastern Europe around 700 BC. In the 1930's it began to be imported to the United States by West Indian sailors. By 1965 there were one million pot smokers in America, and that increased to 26 million by 2009 (according to the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services).

More teens in America smoke pot than cigarettes. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported 23% of High School students smoke pot while only 18% smoked cigarettes.

Cocaine is a highly addictive stimulant derived from the Cocoa leaf. People have been chewing Cocoa leaves for thousands of years in Peru and Brazil. In the mid-nineteenth century an extract was derived that served as an anesthetic, and later at the turn of the Century that extract was added to tonics, including a soft drink called Coca-Cola.

Cocaine is a very dangerous drug because of the potential side effects such as cardiac arrest, seizures, infections of the nasal cavities and lungs, hypertension, psychosis, and overdose. In spite of that in 2007, according to the National Drug Control Policy, there were 36 million people that have used Cocaine or Crack.

There is reference to opium being used to relieve pain as early as 6,000 years ago by the Sumerians. Smoking opium was introduced in this country in the 1850's and 1860's by the Chinese railroad workers. Morphine, a chemical extraction from opium, was first marketed in 1827 to treat opium addiction, but not used widely until the invention of the hypodermic needle 30 years later. It was used extensively to treat the wounded in our Civil War, producing approximately 400,000 addicts who suffered with the "soldier's disease."

Heroin was synthesized from morphine in 1874 and marketed 20 years later in America. Initially it was thought to be the answer to morphine addiction until it was discovered to be twice as strong as morphine and more highly addictive. By the 1920's many of the New York City addicts supported their habits by collecting scrap metal from industrial junkyards earning the name "junkies" by the authorities.

In 1947 Methadone was released and thought to be the "cure" for heroin addiction. It was soon discovered that at best it could help "maintain" an addict in order to help them avoid criminal activity they would otherwise engage in to support their habits.

Narcotic addicts crave opiates because of the intense euphoria and sense of well-being those drugs deliver to them. It is interesting that our response to opiate addiction has been to create another opiate to withdraw or treat those addicted to that feeling. From opium to morphine to heroin to methadone...that philosophy has never been successful.

In 1893 methamphetamine was first synthesized from ephedrine. During World War II it was used extensively in the armed forces to treat exhaustion, increase alertness, and elevate moods. It was extremely popular in the 1960's as a dieting drug. Crystal Meth is a form of the stimulant used commonly as a party drug, which is highly addictive and has serious side effects, including heart attack, stroke, brain damage, paranoia, psychosis or death.

The United Nations considers methamphetamine the most abused hard drug, as there are 26 million meth addicts in the world, which is more than heroin or cocaine addicts combined.

The third most abused substances by teens are inhalants. Huffing involves inhaling volatile substances for their intoxicating effect. The effects can range from alcohol type intoxication to vivid hallucinations, depending on the substance and the dosage. The substances include gases from aerosol cans, gasoline and paint thinners, or glue. These chemicals harm every organ in your body, and the scary truth is that even a first time use of an inhalant can result in sudden death.

Huffing is popular among teens because the substances are legal, easily purchased, and cheap. By the time a student in America reaches the 8th grade, 1 in 5 will have used inhalants. Of those who die from huffing, 22% were first time users.

Prescription drug abuse has risen about 10% every year since 2008, with drugs such as pain killers, tranquilizers, amphetamines, and sedatives. According to a recent study by "Monitoring the Future" prescription drug use is the second most abused category after marijuana.

One of the dangers with these drugs are they are perceived to be safer than street drugs because they are prescribed by a doctor and they are legal. But 28,000 Americans died from misuse of prescription drugs in 2009. Often these drugs are mixed with alcohol, which can be deadly.

Speaking of alcohol, it is the most commonly abused substance in America, by both adults and teens. One in every 12 adults (17.6 million people) is alcohol dependent. By 8th grade 25% of the students have been drunk, and for 12th grade students that number climbs to 62%.

Because teens often drink and drive, car accidents are the number one cause of death for 15-20 year olds. Among college students under age 21, there are 50,000 alcohol related date rapes, and 430,000 assaulted by another student who had been drinking and then began a physical

fight. More than 7 million children are abused or neglected because they live in a home where at least one parent is an alcohol abuser.

Club Drugs, or Rave Drugs, are recreational drugs associated with parties or all night dances and nightclubs. They were first popular in the 1970's at Disco Clubs but have continued to be used through the 1980's and 1990's at Raves. These drugs include Ecstasy, Ketamine, GHB and Rohypnol (most popular date rape drugs) and 'Poppers' (nitrites).

The National Institute of Drug Abuse reported in 2000 that 6.5 million Americans were using Club Drugs.

Two of the more recent drugs that are being abused are Bath Salts and Krokodil, categorized as Designer Drugs. These drugs have their chemical compound altered in order to avoid being controlled by laws against illegal drug compounds. Mephedrone (Bath Salts) is a synthetic form of Cathinone, which is an amphetamine. They are sold under a variety of names and can be easily found in a local convenience store. They are highly addictive and dangerous.

Krokodil is a homemade version of Desomorphine, a derivative of morphine. First synthesized in America in 1932, it is much cheaper and more potent than heroin. There is a current epidemic in Russia where it can easily be made from over the counter codeine. It causes your skin to have a green and scaly look (like a crocodiles) and with continued use the skin can begin to rot. Amputations are common among those who are addicted.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics has published a report –

“Drug Use: Youth” (High School Seniors used within the past year)

Alcohol – 70%

Marijuana – 35%

Stimulants/Opiates – 10%

Tranquilizers/Sedatives – 10%

Hallucinogens – 6%

Cocaine – 5%

Inhalants – 4%

Steroids – 3%

Heroin – 1%

We need to recognize that 90% of Americans with a substance abuse problem started smoking, drinking, or using drugs before the age of 18.

Globally the United States has the highest levels of illegal drug use. It is 3 times greater than Europe's. Clearly, the war on drugs that began 40 years ago in the Nixon administration has not yet been won.

WHAT ARE THE COSTS AND EFFECTS OF ADDICTION

It would be nice to think the costs of addiction are confined to the addicts themselves. However, nothing would be farther from the truth. Every family and community in America is affected either directly or indirectly.

Substance abuse is an equal opportunity destroyer. No population group is immune to its damage. Addiction contributes to many of the current and ongoing challenges our nation faces today.

The New York Times published a data report from the Federal and State Financing on Substance Abuse and Addiction in May, 2009 which declared the following losses:

In Billions of dollars-

\$207.2 – Health Care (Medical treatment, drug rehabilitation programs, insurance). For example, pill addicts who shop around for doctors to score prescriptions costs insurers \$10,000 – 15,000 each annually. This increases health care premiums for us all.

\$47.0 – Justice Department – (Courts, Public Safety, and Penal System) The average cost to house an inmate in New England is \$47,000. Sixty percent of the inmates in Federal Prisons are there for drug related crimes. These crimes are not only for sales or possession of illegal drugs but for robbery, theft, home invasions, prostitution, assault and homicide.

\$46.7 – Children and Family Assistance – Child Protective Services documents 50-80% of all cases of child abuse and neglect involved parents who were alcohol and drug abusers. In cases of domestic violence 55-85% are alcohol or drug related. Babies who are born to mothers who are substance abusers have high premature birth rates, low birth weight, and various other health problems.

\$33.9 – Education and Prevention – In 2011 President Obama allocated \$15.5 billion toward the War on Drugs, of which \$5.5 billion would be geared toward prevention and treatment. None of the government's prevention programs to date have shown any documented evidence of

ongoing success (Including “Just Say No” and “D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education), and have cost the taxpayers billions of dollars.

\$22.6 – Other - The study does not indicate what these other costs are.

\$5.1 – Regulating Alcohol and Tobacco products and collecting those taxes.

\$2.6 – Drug trafficking prevention – The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime targets importation of illegal drugs into America. With an average budget in this one department of \$160 million their strategy remains the same; to target Afghanistan and Myanmar for 90% of the opium (heroin), Colombia and Peru for the cocoa leaf growth (cocaine), and Poland and other Eastern European countries for amphetamine production. Their interest is in shutting down the global suppliers, which is the third aspect of their plan. The first is prevention aimed at our youth, and second is treatment for those who are already addicted. They have 166 countries working cooperatively but their success has been modest.

In a 2008 brief by the National Institute of Drug Abuse encouraging Employee Assistance Programs they estimated an annual loss of \$197 billion from employees who were substance abusers due to absenteeism, poor job performance, work related injuries, double health care costs, and frequent job turnovers.

There are 40 million people annually whose illnesses, accidents, and deaths are related to tobacco, drugs, and alcohol. Heroin overdoses have caused more deaths than traffic accidents in the last few years.

Finally, how do we assign a cost to the children and families that are destroyed because of the dysfunctional and damaging behaviors of the members who are addicts? What about the lost quality of life?

Clearly the cost and effect of addiction reaches far beyond the addict and into the lives of their family and friends, their local communities, and our nation.

OUR CURRENT EPIDEMIC

Our current challenge with addiction is a frightening one...particularly in the New England area where we are in the clutches of a heroin epidemic. In Maine heroin overdoses quadrupled between 2011 and 2012. A few years ago in New Hampshire overdose deaths from heroin were in the single digits. In 2012 they had 37 deaths and last year (2013) 63 people died from that drug.

In January, 2014, Vermont Gov. Pete Shumlin dedicated his State of the Union address to the “full blown heroin crisis.” Heroin overdoses have doubled there from 2012 to 2013.

Accidental drug overdoses increased 38% in Connecticut from 2012 through 2013, with 257 deaths last year. Connecticut’s U.S. senators are calling for more federal money and other assistance to battle a growing heroin epidemic in their state and across the nation.

For the first three months of 2014 Rhode Island lost 72 people to opiate overdoses, which was more than twice the usual number. Rhode Island State Police Col. Steven O’Donnell said “the number of overdose deaths was ten times the homicide rate in the state.”

Heroin claimed 190 lives in Massachusetts from November 2013 through February 2014. Boston’s Mayor launched a campaign “for the entire city to fight against opiate overdoses”, stating that he wanted NARCAN (naloxone...a drug that can reverse heroin overdoses) kits inside police cruisers, fire trucks, and the homes of addicts themselves.

Although NARCAN does save lives, it doesn’t address the problem of addiction. That problem is deeply rooted in the addicts themselves, and it can’t be cured by another drug.

United States Senator Edward J. Markey stated, “Heroin is a curse upon America unlike anything that had been seen before.”

So why the drastic increase in heroin addiction?

We mentioned previously that in the 1990’s addictive pain killers were loosely prescribed generating millions of pill addicts, otherwise known as “Generation RX.” As regulations began to tighten on physicians, the demand became greater than the legitimate supply driving those addicted to the streets to find relief. The price for the narcotic pills sold illegitimately on the streets was extremely high (one OxyContin tablet could cost you \$30.00) compared to the cost of a legitimate prescription.

At that point, heroin becomes an easy and reasonable answer because it is plentiful, easily available, and most importantly, cheap (you could buy a stamp bag for \$5.00). The problem is that when the addict was taking opiate pills they knew what they were taking. Each dosage in the pill was the same. With heroin you never know what you are getting. It depends on how pure the product was to begin with, what it was cut with, and how much it was cut.

The danger lies in the fact that a bag from one dealer could be equivalent in opiate content to three bags bought from another dealer. And currently, the deadly additive to heroin that is causing so many of the recent deaths is Fentanyl, a drug used primarily for pre and post-surgical procedures.

For example, in New England heroin purity is about 15%, but in New Jersey it is anywhere from 40-50%. New Jersey views heroin and opiate abuse as “the number one health care crisis” in its state, where it has increased 700% in the last decade. From 2010 through 2013 New Jersey saw 4,300 drug related deaths.

These addicts are no longer the stereotypical urban minorities from lower income families, but rather white, young, educated suburbanites. The fact that some recent celebrities have died from heroin overdoses has brought attention to that fact, most notably “Glee” TV star Cory Monteith.

According to an analysis published in the journal JAMA Psychiatry, during the last decade 90% of new heroin users were white and heroin overdoses have climbed by 45% between 2006 and 2010.

In 2012, there were 23.9 million Americans aged 12 and over who were using illegal drugs, and 10 million who were alcoholic.

In regard to addiction, we are in an unprecedented epidemic.

“Drugs destroy lives and communities, undermine sustainable human development and generate crime. Drugs affect all sectors of society in all countries, in particular, drug abuse affects the freedom and development of our young people, the world’s most valuable asset...” (Opening to Political Declaration adopted by United Nations General Assembly, June 10, 1998).

We will continue to be flooded by drugs of all kinds as long as there is a demand for them. Until we target the heart of the matter that causes people to use drugs in the first place, we can never hope to win a battle much less the war.

Social problems such as childhood sexual and physical abuse, broken and fatherless homes, poverty, victimization of all kinds, are factors that are all rooted in sin.

That is why Teen Challenge has always believed that a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is the only long term answer and why we claim to have a “cure for addiction.” It is not our program that sets people free from their addictions, but rather the Person they meet when they come to the program... Jesus. It is not our staff that changes addicts when they come through our doors, but rather the power of God’s Holy Spirit who encounters them and transforms their hearts.

The government does not have an answer for this crisis. But God does. Teen Challenge can offer hope to every addict because of what God has said in His word, “Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new.” (Contemporary English Version)