



Eagle Forum Report

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Who Is Actually “For the Children”?

HOW TO SOLVE THE OPIOID CRISIS

by Thomas P. Dooley, Ph.D., President of Path Clearer (www.PathClearer.com) and CEO of Trends in Pharma Development (www.PanX.us). He has three decades of leadership experience in pharmaceutical research and entrepreneurship.

On February 2, 2017 I discovered the lifeless body of our 24-year old son, Thomas, sitting in a chair in our basement. He was the latest victim of the Opioid Crisis. An estimated 64,000 died of drug overdoses in the USA in 2016, and the majority were due to opioid pain medicines.

How did this tragedy happen to our beloved youngest son? As an adolescent Thomas developed anxiety associated with obsessive compulsive disorder. A psychiatrist prescribed him benzodiazepines (e.g., alprazolam and clonazepam), but side effects developed quickly and were horrible. Years later an oral surgeon removed his wisdom teeth and prescribed an opioid pain medicine.

When he experienced the

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“high” Thomas said he felt “normal” for the first time in his teen years. He later transitioned from prescription opioids to illegal street opioids (e.g., fentanyl and heroin) from which he ultimately died.

What are the factors contributing to the Opioid Crisis? The problems are numerous. Prescription opioid drugs (e.g., oxycodone and hydrocodone) are routinely prescribed by medical providers for moderate-to-severe pain, and their use has grown considerably. On the street, illegal opioids include heroin and high potency synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl. Fentanyl is 50 times more potent than the morphine that is derived from poppies. Fentanyl is likely the major reason that the USA is experiencing so many overdose deaths. It only takes a few milligrams, the equivalent of two grains of salt, to kill an adult.

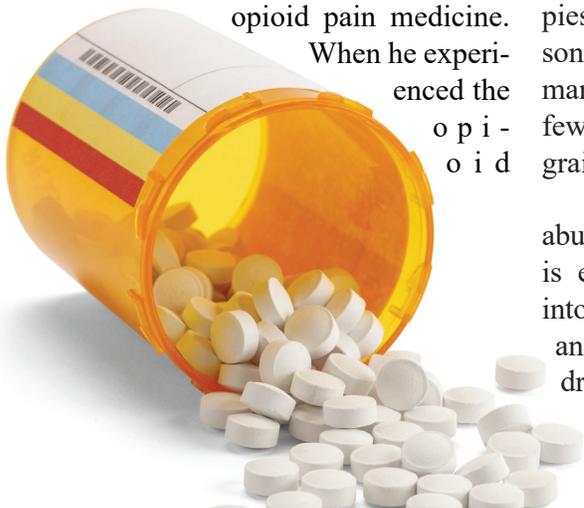
Why are so many young people abusing opioids? The euphoric “high” is extreme and easily entices users into habitual use. Addiction is easy and can start with legal prescription drugs for a genuine medical need to address pain. Modern communication technologies, such as the “dark web” and smart phones

provide easy access to high potency opioid drugs. Young adults have no problem finding drug sources.

Unlike former heroin drug dealers in prior decades, who “cut” their drugs with inactive ingredients to sell less potent drugs, today’s dealers do the opposite. They now “cut” heroin to make it more potent by including high potency fentanyl. Drug dealers are selfish and greedy sociopaths, who actually desire that some of their purchasers overdose, in order to claim high potency on the street! The first time a naive person experiments with high potency opioids he/she can overdose and die. We have never in history had a more effective way of killing our own people than with high potency opioids like fentanyl.

A major contributing factor to the Opioid Crisis is mental health, and in particular anxiety disorders. Patients who have anxiety and mood disorders use more than half of opioid prescriptions and are twice as likely to use prescription opioids than normal patients. Further confounding this issue, the standard-of-care drugs to treat anxiety are addictive benzodiazepines (e.g., alprazolam and clonazepam) that have other safety concerns, too. Benzodiazepines have the potential for dependence, tolerance, and abuse. In 2016 the FDA issued a black box warning against the

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coincident use of opioids and benzodiazepines. Thus, there is an “Opioid — Benzodiazepine Dilemma” within the Opioid Crisis.

As a pharmaceutical researcher and entrepreneur, I have been aware for two decades of the need for non-addictive alternatives to benzodiazepines for the treatment of anxiety. The life experiences of my son, Thomas, inspired a patented invention of a new class of anti-anxiety drugs. PanX® drugs were developed without using any addictive active ingredients. Had this type of medicine been available a decade ago, perhaps my son would still be alive today. Non-addictive drugs hold promise as one of the needed tools to address the Opioid Crisis.

Where are the opioids coming from? Prescription opioids are manufactured by pharmaceutical firms and sold by pharmacies. Illegal opioids can start as legal drugs that are diverted into street use. But, more significantly there are street drugs, like heroin and fentanyl, from illegal sources. Currently most heroin is produced from opium in Afghanistan and enters the USA via Mexico. And, most fentanyl is synthesized in China and enters the USA directly or via Mexico.

What can be done to help opioid addicts? The pastor of the Lovelady Center (www.LoveladyCenter.org), Lestley Drake, was so moved by the eulogy I shared at my son’s funeral, that he invited me to become a volunteer member of their pastoral team. This center is among the largest and most successful faith-based recovery centers in the nation, with 400 women in residence. The ministry was started by Brenda Spahn as a “whole-way house”, a holistic program to restore women from lives of addiction and incarceration into fulfilling lives of purpose. The center provides counseling, Biblical teaching and worship, meals, education, medical assistance,

and hard work to create a pattern of discipline. This nine-month holistic program brings hope and restores lives. Every week I enjoy speaking with dozens of women whose lives are changing from opioid addicts into joy-filled Loveladies. This exemplary model should be emulated by our nation’s churches and synagogues. Faith-based recovery centers work.

As one involved in the Opioid Crisis at the personal, professional, and pastoral levels, I offer the following suggested SOLUTIONS:

New Pain Medicines: Scientists should discover and develop new non-addicting non-opioid drugs for moderate-to-severe pain.

New Anti-Anxiety Medicines: My company needs to further develop and commercialize the PanX® drugs to replace addictive benzodiazepines.

Access to Opioid Antidotes: Local authorities should provide greater access to naloxone antidote for overdoses for first responders and families of addicts.

Recovery from Addiction: The most effective means of recovery from addiction is faith-based residential recovery centers coupled with long-term accountability.

Counseling: Counselors, psychologists, and ministers should address the root-level issues of mental health disorders, which often drive individuals to abuse opioids and benzodiazepines.

Parental Authority: The federal and state authorities should remove “privacy” obstacles (e.g., HIPAA) that inhibit concerned parents from consulting with healthcare professionals caring for the mental health and addiction problems of their own children. Parents often know relevant information that could save their child.

Supply: Customs & Border Patrol, the U.S. Post Office, and law enforcement need to limit access to high potency synthetic opioids,

especially fentanyl.

Information: Concerned citizens need to warn high school and college students, and the media should provide public service announcements on the life-ending dangers of fentanyl. © 2017 Thomas P. Dooley 

Editor’s Note on Opioids: The initial report of the Trump Administration’s Commission on Combating Drug Addiction and the Opioid Crisis (<https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/ondcp/commission-interim-report.pdf>) states that about 142 Americans die every day from the opioid epidemic, more people than die from gun homicides and car crashes combined, according to the Center for Disease Control. Between 1999 and 2015, more than 560,000 Americans died due to drug overdoses with opioids being a prime contributor to our addiction and overdose crisis. In 2015, nearly two-thirds of drug overdoses were linked to opioids like Percocet, OxyContin, heroin, and fentanyl (a synthetic opioid about 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine). Enough opioids are prescribed in the U.S. for every American to be medicated around the clock for three weeks.

While Afghanistan produces about 90 percent of the world’s heroin, China produces most of the synthetic opioid fentanyl. Mexican drug cartels are primary sources to Americans, but fentanyl usually enters our country through the U.S. Post Office. The Opioid Commission will be issuing recommendations to President Trump.

Eagle Forum will equip you with the facts about these commonly prescribed drugs in hopes of protecting you and your precious families from this growing epidemic.

EAGLE FORUM

President: *Eunie Smith*

Report Editor: *Cathie Adams*

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200 W. Third St., Ste. 502

Alton, IL 62002 (618) 433-8990

Eagle@EagleForum.org

EagleForum.org