

# The use and abuse of opioids in the United States and other countries.

By: Dr. Niru Prasad, MD

Opioids are the class of drugs either derived from or chemically similar to opium poppy seeds derived from a flowering plant.

The opioid epidemic is a world wide deep national and international epidemic killing almost 100 Americans each day, more than the automobile accidents.

What is opium?

The seeds of so called poppy seeds are derived from a beautiful hardy flower *papaver somniferum* 4 feet high in multi-color, grows in temperate climates, needs no fertilizer, attracts few pests, and resemble weeds. The bloom of flower lasts only for a few days and petals fall leaving greenish grey pods. The seeds in pods have no psychogenic effect, however, once the seeds are crushed and dissolved with water while taken orally in different forms, the calming effect and euphoria are produced.

What are opioids?

Opioids are a class of drugs either derived from or chemically similar to compounds found in



opium seeds. The opioid group includes: legal prescription pain killer like oxycodone, morphine, codeine, fentanyl and more. Sadly, heroin which is illegal is also an opioid. The prescription drug can be taken orally, as a film patch that dissolves in mouth for immediate effect or may be given intra muscular or intra venous for anesthesia. The misuse of drugs by addicted person includes crushed pills as nasal inhalation, or self-injections for a relaxed euphoria and laughter.

What is heroin?

Heroin is sold as an off white or brown powder and can be taken as snorting, nasal inhalation,

injected into the vein or inhaled. Prior to inhaling, the powder are generally placed in aluminum foil and burnt over a spoon so the vapors can be inhaled faster.

How do you recognize symptoms of opioid abuse?

The signs and symptoms of opioids use and abuse include: feeling of euphoria, relaxation, nausea, and mental confusion. Opioids work by binding to opioid receptors in the brain reducing the perception of pain, and stimulating the brain's reward's center. Opioids also quickly builds up physical dependence and addictions in individuals if taken frequently.

The world wise epidemics of opioid addictions, signs and symptom of substance abuse include general changes in mood and behavior, drowsiness and depressions and disorientation among the users. Drug paraphernalia among teenagers and young individuals can easily be seen in and around the victim's bedroom or living spaces. Furthermore, presence of drug vials, needles, rubber tubing's and bunt or bent spoons are very suspicious. If taken in higher doses one develops rapid heart rate, difficulty breathing, pin point pupils and loss of consciousness.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (1-877-643-2644) recommends the following on preventing your children and adolescent drug abuse.

The preventative principles include helping patients, parents, educators, and community leaders to plan for and deliver prevention plans at, schools, with teachers the students and social services.

The potential impact of specific risks and protective factors changes with age and circumstances. The risk factor within family have more impact on young kids while

adolescents are more influenced by their peer pressure.

How to prevent opioid abuse?

An early intervention with risk factor (aggressive behavior and poor self-control) are often a greater impact on child than a later intervention.

The risk and protective factors affect all ages, however, they might have a different effect according to their age, gender, ethnicity, culture and environment.

The prevention programs should address the type of drug used alone or in combination with alcohol, smoking, abuse of prescription and nonprescription narcotics and more.

The family based plans enhance family involvement, parenting skills, and help from substance abuse clinics.

Furthermore, these prevention programs are more effective when they involve interactive skills such as peer discussion group parent role and more.

References

The selected resources and references regarding opioid use and abuse and more drugs abuse include,

1. National Institute on Drug Abuse
2. A research based guide for parents, educators, and community leaders, second edition, CBC News April 5 2018
3. To Combat the Opioid Epidemic, We Must Be Honest About All Its Causes, Harvard Business Review, Blumenthal and Seervai, Oct. 26, 2107