



Legislative Brief

AUGUST 16, 2017

OHIO'S OPIATE EPIDEMIC IS SADLY NUMBER 1 IN THE USA!

Ohio's Opiate epidemic has grown to a crisis of unparalleled proportions with deadly consequences. The early problem included both heroin and prescription pain relievers. These substances accounted for nearly 63% of the state's 1,544 overdose deaths in 2010. Also in addition to the human toll, Ohio's epidemic severely strained law enforcement, criminal justice and health care resources and Ohio's publicly-funded alcohol and drug addiction treatment system. According to studies, a person abusing drugs has medical expenses eight times those of a non-addict. 8.2 million doses of prescription pain killers were legally dispersed to Scioto County residents in 2011. That amounts to 103.6 doses for every man, woman, and child living there. This doubles the per capita rate dispensed in Cuyahoga County.

What are Opioids? They are drugs that work in the body the way opium does—they block the body's ability to feel pain. Some are made directly from opium; for example, the pain relievers (oxycodone, hydrocodone, and fentanyl) - better known by such brand names as Oxycontin, Vicodin, Percocet and Actiq. Heroin is also an opioid. The problem occurs when someone is unable to stop using the drug after the pain stops. Fortunately, the majority of patients treated for pain with opioids don't become addicted.

According to a National Survey on Drug Use and Health in 2013, there were 2.4 million reports of people in the U.S. who were addicted or abused opioids. Over 1.8 million were addicted to opioid subscription pain relievers. 517,000 were addicted to Heroin as well.

The *New York Times* wrote an article, Sept. 5, 2016 entitled "Drug Linked to Ohio Overdoses Can Kill in Doses Smaller than a Snowflake" by Jack Healy. He wrote of Cincinnati resident John Hatmaker who overdosed seven times in four years. He had been addicted to pain pills and heroine. Recently he planned to attend a HOPE over Heroin prayer rally with his son, but fell to the sidewalk. He became one of 200 to overdose in Cincinnati in the last 2 weeks, leaving 3 dead. Addiction specialists said the sharp increases in overdoses are a grim symptom of America's heroine epidemic and the growing number of powerful synthetic opiates like fentanyl. This opiate can be 50 times stronger than heroine. Another synthetic drug called carfentanil, is as much as 100 times more

potent than fentanyl. The coroner of Hamilton County determined that several deaths in Cincinnati were confirmed cases of carfentanil. This synthetic drug is being manufactured in China or Mexico and is shipped with heroin.

"Then suddenly a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his cloak. For she said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well." Jesus turned and seeing her said, "Take heart daughter; your faith has made you well." And instantly the woman was made well.

(Matthew 9:20-22 NRSV)

**SENATORS BROWN
AND PORTMAN
HAVE BOTH WORKED
HARD TO GET MORE
FEDERAL DOLLARS
TO HELP STOP OUR
OPIATE EPIDEMIC!**

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**You are welcome to copy or quote
from the Legislative Brief.
Tom Smith, Editor**

It is used as a tranquilizer on livestock and elephants with no practical use on humans. The drug has shown up in Columbus. Police and Emergency Crews respond to 20 or 30 calls per day. They said that they sometimes have to give 2, 3, or even 5 doses of naloxone spray to revive some overdosed people. Usually, one quick spray is enough to block a person's opiate receptors and immediately jolt them out of an overdose of heroin. Naloxone was meant for heroin, but not synthetic fentanyl or carfentanil.

Attorney General Mike DeWine plans to sue 5 Pharmaceutical companies over their role in creating the current Opioid epidemic. The State of Ohio estimates it is home to 200,000 Opioid addicts. That is the equivalent to the number of people living in Akron.

In 2012, the Opioid doses prescribed were enough to supply every man, woman, and child in Ohio with 68 pills apiece. The Pharma companies told doctors these pain pills were not very addictive. Atty. General DeWine said we are losing 10 to 12 people every day.

Recently, Governor Kasich reached an agreement with the State Medical Board and Associations, who represent doctors and hospitals to report the specific diagnosis of every patient who receives a prescription for pain pills. A record 3050 Ohioans died from drug overdoses in 2015. The amount of pain killers in Franklin Co. dropped by 41% from 2010 to 2015. Across Ohio Opioid prescriptions decreased by at least 10% in all but 13 of 88 counties.

Mike DeWine said, "Users often become addicts to prescription drugs and move onto Opioid-based street drugs"! He said three-fourths of people addicted to heroin or the more powerful fentanyl and carfentanil started with pain medicine.

In Jackson County, Ohio topped the 2015 pain relievers list with doctors prescribing 1582 morphine milligrams

equivalent per person representing a 38 day supply for each resident.

Local communities are changing the culture by trying to provide more treatment beds and easier access to the very important drug Naloxone, a life-saving antidote to heroin.

Franklin County had someone die almost every day in 2016 and this year is on pace to hit 500.

Opioid addiction requires a strong community commitment that includes treatment and availability of first responders and law enforcement prevention and community education for parents and teens.

Three important facts for families to remember and practice:

1. Children of parents who talk to them about the danger of drugs are up to 50% less likely to use them.
2. More Americans die from drug abuse than automobile crashes.
3. Most teens who abuse pain relievers say they get them from family or friends.

Start Talking! 
Building a Drug-Free Future

For more information, access the website "Start Talking! Drug Prevention Program."