

# Heroin Examined

By Jim Rachels



The drug heroin was introduced in 1874 by C. R. Alder Wright. It is made from the resin of poppy plants. It was originally intended to be used for medical purposes. It was designed to help with pain relief and was prescribed by doctors at the time to their patients.

It can be snorted, smoked, or injected. After some testing and trials, people were touting heroin as a wonder drug. In 1898 Bayer started producing heroin on a commercial scale. It was marketed as medicine for things like tuberculosis as well as something to help with morphine addiction.

It took some time but eventually, it started showing negative results as people were building up a tolerance to what they were being given and the doctors needed to prescribe higher dosages and more pills to achieve the same results. And this continued on for some time.

Eventually, the law caught up with the production of heroin and it became extremely regulated. It was also deemed a narcotic with extremely addictive properties. And this is what was kept in mind while writing the laws we have today against heroin.

There is an opioid crisis happening in the U.S. Many people using heroin nowadays are on it because they were abusing prescription medications like Percocet and Oxycontin and their supply either got too expensive or they could no longer find those drugs. And heroin was the next best thing if they could not get what they usually used. It was stronger than what people had been taking and were much less expensive.

It was robbing so many people of the person they were before they started using drugs. And so many people are dying of overdoses every single day. And another thing that is killing so many is people think that they are buying heroin when they are in fact getting heroin with fentanyl mixed in it or it might even be pure fentanyl and this leads to more and more overdoses. And the reason dealers are adding fentanyl to heroin is to make it stronger and more addictive than it already is. They want to keep their customers coming back at any cost, and many die because of this.

I think in any piece that is being written about the opioid epidemic in America Purdue Pharma needs to be brought up. This was a company that was responsible for the manufacturing of the drug Oxycontin. What Purdue Pharma did was one of the most aggressive marketing campaigns touting the efficacy of the drug. But there was one main thing that was the most important thing in their sales pitch. They claimed that only 1% of people using this drug got addicted. There was absolutely no science to back up these claims. But unfortunately, the FDA allowed Purdue to put on their labels that this drug has been shown to be less addictive than other prescribed painkillers on the market.

Purdue Pharma's executives that were running the company and the marketing campaign knew that these drugs were much more addictive than they were telling the public. They continually came out with new marketing schemes and campaigns to push the drug more and more. Then another thing they did was start making larger pills. They became known for having pills up to 80 milligrams. They continually came up with reasons to prescribe the drug more and more. Why wouldn't doctors do this? The FDA was backing what Purdue Pharma was claiming at the time about only 1% of patients would potentially develop addiction issues. Once again there was no science to back this up but it happened anyway and destroyed many lives. I heard that in one year doctors prescribed so much that it was the equivalent of everyone in America getting a bottle for themselves.

The US was at one time responsible for using 83% of the world's oxycodone and almost 98% of the world's hydrocodone. And the rate at which we were using more and more was astronomical. When I heard these numbers I was taken aback. This shows the number of prescriptions written was more than anyone might have believed. And many of the people abusing these drugs are quite young. It's because many of these children starting by stealing pills from their parents and other people's medicine cabinets and then also buy pills on the street. Then one day they were unable to find pills and many were then introduced to heroin. It gave them the high that they were chasing after and it was also much cheaper and more readily available for sale.

So what are some of the treatment options available for heroin use? One method is called "Medically Assisted Treatment." This is when places administer things like Methadone, Suboxone a.k.a. Buprenorphine, and Naltrexone to help deal with addiction issues.

Methadone was approved for the treatment of pain by the FDA in 1947. Methadone was shown to be effective in treating opiate addiction in the mid-1960s and was approved by the FDA in 1972 for opiate addiction treatment.

There are a few benefits of the use of medically assisted treatment. First, it keeps the person taking it sober and off of street drugs. Second, the rate of HIV/Hepatitis C is also lowered. Lastly, the rate of crime goes down. All of these are positives and I believe it has us pointed in the right direction. Another thing to consider is having people on one of these programs keeps them coming back and encourages them to get into some type of treatment.

Also, people who are on these medically assisted treatments end up getting their lives back. They get their children back, and their spouses back and

hopefully can go out and go back to their job back, and if not they can find full-time employment elsewhere. These can be life-changing treatments for people who previously had felt hopeless and just felt utterly defeated and thought there was no way out. And this goes for all the different types of medically assisted treatments. Some find this to be a controversial topic but my stance on it is if that person gets their life back then more power to them. I believe that they should continue with the treatment if that is the case. Everyone's recovery is different and no one person should be allowed to tell the other what to do. Each person should choose their own path to sobriety.

Some will argue that this is not considered sobriety. To those people, I say no one has the right to say anything to someone as long as they are doing no harm to anyone or themselves. I also believe as long as you're under the supervision of a doctor whatever you choose should be ok as long as you take what is given to you as prescribed. I also believe someone is sober once they decide they are sober. Because no two paths are the same and what works for one person may not always work for another.

In almost all cases of addiction, people are no longer taking the drug strictly for pleasure. They now needed the drug as they were addicted. And most addicts need to use to "get well" and not feel the withdrawal symptoms that come along with heroin. The withdrawals can be things like diarrhea, vomiting, and cold sweats.

Another tool in the battle against opioid-related deaths is Narcan. This is something that can be administered to someone who has had an opioid overdose and this pretty much brings them back to life. Many people's respiratory systems become extremely depressed to the point where the person stops breathing. This is where Narcan comes in as it revives people most of the time. There are two ways that Narcan can be given to someone. It can be used as a nasal spray and another way is injecting it. Both ways are equally effective.

So many people are affected or know someone that is affected by addiction. It destroys lives and tears apart families. Heroin addiction is an awful thing to have to go through. And it is something that so many go through and many don't make it out alive.

Another thing to take notice of is that the demographics for this have completely changed over the past few years. At one point 90% of new addicts were white and out of those 80% started their drug use on prescription drugs. Many people also say this is why the opioid epidemic has gotten as much publicity as it has. These are dramatically different numbers historically speaking. This just goes to show that addiction affects so many different types of people. Addiction does not care about the color of

your skin or the religions you follow, it will take you no matter what  
your background is.