

HEROIN

Introduction

I chose to research this topic because drugs are all around us. Whether or not we notice or use them, we are constantly surrounded by someone who has taken, may take or knows someone who uses drugs. Heroin caught my attention because I've lost friends to it. By "lost" I mean they have either passed away, overdosed or have gone to rehab because of it. One of my best friends growing up got mixed up with heroin during his college years. We were like brother until drugs took over his life and we went our separate ways because of it. He's an important reason why I chose to do heroin. A few weeks ago he had called me up, we haven't spoken in a while but I knew he was clean, or so I thought. Push comes to shove he's still battling from his past addiction to heroin, OCs and cocaine. He was taking a drug called, "Suboxone" which is a drug prescribed by doctors to help overcome your addiction to opiates. After our conversation I knew that I had to do more research and my topic became even more important to me. Doing research on this topic will help me and others understand the effects of this deadly drugs.

Simply put, heroin originates from the opium poppy. This flower usually grows in Asia, Mexico and South America which are the biggest producers of heroin. Afghanistan is one of the most productive areas of heroin production. Pure heroin is usually white, sometimes it can be dark brown and "black tar heroin is either sticky or hard." Heroin is a narcotic and is pain relieving. It is one of the most addictive and dangerous drugs because of the high you get. During this high you are relaxed and it "gives you a burst or rush of good feelings..." It can be injected, smoked or snorted, injection is the most popular and the most dangerous because sharing needles with someone infected with HIV or hepatitis can be passed on to you. Heroin is deadly and can kill you, the best way to avoid it and every other drug is to stay drug free.

(http://kidshealth.org/kid/grow/drugs_alcohol/know_drugs_heroin.html)

Section 1: Background and Problem Statement

- Web site #1 Name: Healthy People 2020
- Web address:
<http://healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/overview.aspx?topicid=40>
- Background Information:

- According to this Web site, “In 2005, an estimated 22 million Americans struggled with a drug or alcohol problem.” Drugs, including heroin are being defined as a health problem because, “almost 95 percent of people with substance use problems are considered unaware of their problem.” People with drug problems don’t necessarily recognize the fact that they do have a problem because it’s a normal part of their life. Because of this high percentage of people, it “highlights the importance of increasing prevention efforts...” and enabling those who need help, to actually get help no matter what.
- **Web site #2 Name:** National Institute on Drug Abuse
- **Web address:** : <http://www.nida.nih.gov/infofacts/treatmeth.html>
- **Background Information:**
 - Heroin can be injected which can be another deadly way to harm your body. If the user shares needles for drug use with someone else, they are endangering themselves by possibly spreading HIV, Hepatitis or other deadly diseases through dirty needles. By using a needle to inject heroin into your body, you’re actually doing even more damage than just taking the drug. It can also lead to collapsed veins over time. Another public health endangerment is in students. According to the Web site, “2008 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, the number of current heroin users aged 12 or older in the United States increased from 153,000 in 2007 to 213,000 in 2008.”
- **Web site #3 Name:** Drug Free
- **Web address:** <http://www.drugfree.org/drug-guide/heroin>
- **Background Information:**
 - There are not only short-term effects like the actual high but in the long-run it’s even worst. Long term effects “appear after repeated use for some period of time.” Infections, and as mentioned before: collapsed veins are some of the serious long-term effects. Pneumonia because of “the poor health condition of the abuser” is also a long-term side effect. Over time, “physical dependence and addiction develop.” With this addiction eventually can become withdrawal. This is important to public health because not everyone can afford to get the critical help that is necessary to overcome it. Cravings, pain, restlessness and vomiting are just a few symptoms of withdrawal. I’ve been told by many who have experience withdrawal that it really is

the worst thing that one can go through. Medical attention is absolutely necessary.

Section 2: Research

Web site #1 Name: The Vaults of Erowid

- Web address:
[http://www.erowid.org/references/refs_view.php?ID=7117&S=heroin or diacetylmorphine](http://www.erowid.org/references/refs_view.php?ID=7117&S=heroin%20or%20diacetylmorphine)
- Summary of the research:
 - An interesting research experiment conducted on people who used psychedelic drugs and those who used opiate based drugs. The study was conducted at the Haight-Ashbury Free Medical Clinic Detoxification Unit from 1969-1970. They compared thirty-seven male and twenty five female heroin addicts to a group of volunteers which consisted of one hundred males and seventy-three females. It concluded that most of these volunteers were considered psychedelic drug users who had used over fifteen different types but were not addicted and some never even used opiates. This makes one wonder if one prefers one type of enhancer over another?
- Web site #2 Name: Study Backs Heroin to Treat Addiction
- Web address:
<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/20/health/research/20heroin.html>
- Summary of the research:
 - This article was about a study that was done in North America on how to help treat heroin addiction. It said that doctors were prescribing heroin users prescriptions of heroin, obviously in smaller doses. Although it is controversial because it's an illegal drug and "also because policy makes worry that treating with heroin may exacerbate the habit," it is said that it's shown to work better than such treatments like methadone and "patients will be more willing to take it." Another negative about the study is that "those taking the heroin injections did suffer more side effects; there were 10 overdoses and six seizures." But doctors said "there was no evidence of abuse"
- Web site #3 Name: Get The Facts
- Web address: <http://www.drugwarfacts.org/cms/Heroin>
- Summary of the research:

- In bullet 34 of the “research” section of this Web site I found an interesting study. In this study they found that when people were found dead because of “heroin overdoses” there was actually more in their body than just one drug. “Alcohol detected in 45% of subjects and benzodiazepines in just over a quarter.” It went on to say that these drugs “act as central nervous system depressants” and because of this, they can “prolong the depressant effects of heroin.” Basically saying that a lot of the time someone fatally overdoses, there is more than just heroin in their system. Everything adds up.

Section 3: Statistics

- Web site #1 Name: Office of National Drug Control Policy
- Web address: http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/drugfact/heroin/heroin_ff.html
- Summary of the statistics:
 - This statistic says that “approximately 3.8 million Americans aged 12 or older reported trying heroin at least once...” this was in a 2008 survey by NSDUH. It means that “1.5% of the population aged 12 or older” have tried it in 2008. The average age of a first time user between the ages of 12 to 49 was 23.4 years in 2008. This “number of heroin initiates was not significantly different from the number in 2002 (117,000).” Also concluded in these stats was the fact that almost 87% of twelfth graders who were surveyed in 2008 said “that using heroin regularly was a ‘great risk’.” This brings us to the conclusion that although such small percentages of the population are trying heroin, realistically it’s a significant number of people because the population is in billions. That’s a lot of lives that are at risk. Between 2003, 2005 and 2007 between 9th and 12th graders the percent of students reporting lifetime heroin use has seen increasing and decreasing percentages.
- Web site #2 Name: National Drug and Alcohol Abuse Helpline
- Web address: <http://www.drug-rehabs.org/drug-statistics.php>
- Summary of the statistics:
 - After reading the stats on this Web site I found the results to be eye-opening. “According to DAWN, heroin and morphine accounted for 51% of drug related deaths ruled accidental or unexpected in 1999.” Another statistic was that studies say there is a movement from

injecting to snorting heroin because “of increased purity.” Also, a heroin addict usually spends \$150-\$200 a day to support their habit. I found this to be significant in relation to the public because a lot of these users can’t afford their addiction. With that comes an increase in crimes, most notably are robberies.

- Web site #3: Drug Availability in the United States
- Web address: <http://www.justice.gov/ndic/pubs38/38661/heroin.htm>
- Summary of the statistics:
 - This article says that heroin “remains widely available in many U.S. drug markets; availability is increasing in some areas.” It says that police are saying heroin is still “widely available” and in “some areas” its availability is “increasing.” Many facts such as wholesale purity, lower prices and higher numbers of abusers are reasons for this. Availability is in some ways directly related to production of the drug in Mexico. Since we border Mexico and many travel in and out of the country frequently to the United States, it is crossing the border all the time. “From 2004 through 2008, heroin production estimates for Mexico increased 342 percent, from 8.6 metric tons pure to 38 metric tons pure.” This availability has also caused more abuse and heroin related overdoses and deaths. Agencies in “29 drug markets spanning 17 states” saw increases of heroin related overdoses. They said that there are a “variety of factors” that have contributed to this but mainly it’s because of the increasing availability of the drug, also prescription opiate users are switching to heroin. Mexico is taking the place of South American heroin that has normally been the dominating origin of the drug.

Section 4: Consumer Information

- Web site #1 Name: Buprenorphine
- Web address: <http://buprenorphine.samhsa.gov/about.html>
- Summary of the information:
 - In 2002 the FDA approved a buprenorphine product, “Subutex” to help treat opioid addiction. It comes in two dosage forms: a 2 mg and an 8 mg tablet. It is an opioid. What this does is tricks your body into thinking you’re still using an opiate such as heroin but in smaller doses so it helps with withdrawal symptoms. The effects increase “linearly with increasing doses of the drug until at moderate doses they reach a plateau...” which is called the “ceiling effect. “Because

of this treatment this tablet is less risky with regards to “abuse, addiction, and side effects compared to full opioid agonists.” It is still “safer in overdose than opioid full agonists.” Respiratory depression can still be caused by the tablet but is less likely to occur. It does have the same side effects that are like other opiates such as: fever, insomnia and craving. Naloxone is put into the tablet as well to reduce the possibility that users can get addicted to it. If patients have high levels of physical dependence, this “may not be the treatment of choice.”

- Web site #2 Name: Heroin
- Web address: <http://www.watton.org/drugsinfo/aboutheroin.shtml>
- Summary of the information:
 - Something new I learned about heroin from this article is the kind of high you get from the drug. “Heroin slows people down giving them a feeling of warmth and detachment.” It also makes you severely depressed after taking it. So when taking it you feel amazing and when you come down from it it’s like being hit by a truck and then some. I also learned from this article that “it can lessen the desire to eat” and it “blocks out both physical and mental pain” which is why people become too addicted to such drugs. Another thing I learned is that it can be laced with such things as “glucose or talcum powder” so you don’t really know what you’re putting into your body. To make sure users don’t experience withdrawal symptoms after using, they tend to keep using and that’s when it becomes a habit. “The biggest problem in staying off heroin is fighting the psychological craving.”
- Web site #3 Name: Facts About Heroin
- Web address: <http://www.ireta.org/sbirt/pdf/Heroin.pdf>
- Summary of the information:
 - A chilling piece of information I learned from this article is about overdosing and death. It says that addicts sometimes take a larger dose for a better high and they don’t know what it can be laced with. Also, they don’t know how strong the heroin actually is so if they take a large dose of strong stuff than it’s increasing their chances of overdosing which could lead to death. “Overdoses are common, and they kill fast.” It says that fingers and lips turn blue and muscles become tense and then your heartbeat dramatically decreases. Eventually the user will lose consciousness and their breathing is

reduced to almost nothing, and then they stop and they die. “Nearly half of all addicts have been present when someone else overdosed on heroin...”

Section 5: Solutions to the Problem (or Issue)

- Web site #1 Name: Heroin Treatment Options
- Web address: <http://heroin.net/heroin-treatment-options/>
- Summary of the information:
 - Residential and Outpatient treatment centers are the two major types of heroin treatment centers. They both offer a lot of the same types of treatment that include, detox, counseling and aftercare and help “the individual over the physical and psychological effects of heroin.” Residential treatment induces “around the clock care” and support networks. It’s an “immersive experience, where an individual can gain support and guidance...” Some people can’t afford “to put their lives on hold” and live in a residential treatment center. Outpatient programs provide high quality treatment without having to live somewhere specifically for it. The downside of this method is that the user is not in a controlled environment and may be more prone to a relapse or continual drug use.

- Web site #2 Name: Drug Trafficking Ring Taken Down
- Web address: <http://www.justice.gov/dea/pubs/states/newsrel/2011/phnx032811.html>
- Summary of the information:
 - The DEA is responsible for cracking down on drug-trafficking in the United States. Recently they broke up a trafficking organization that was transporting drugs on the America-Mexico border. This ring is supposed to be responsible “for trafficking kilo quantities of heroin, methamphetamine and cocaine into the United States from Mexico...” This was a huge bust and although there are still thousands of other trafficking rings, at least they were able to prevent that much more from entering the streets of America.

- Web site #3 Name: CDC
- Web address: <http://www.cdc.gov/Mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5019a2.htm>
- Summary of the information:

- The Center for Disease Control or the CDC has this article about heroin injection use in New Jersey. “In response to the trend in injection drug use, in 2000, the New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services...” created abuse treatment for young heroin users who lived in eight suburban counties “with the highest proportion of injecting among young heroin users.” They want to use that information to see trends in injecting and drug use and to “direct and extent prevention efforts to new populations...”

Conclusions

In conclusion there is a lot to be said about heroin. Most importantly it should never be used by anyone. Although that is virtually impossible to control, there are still measures that are being taking to control the drug trade throughout the world. Here in the United States the DEA cracks down daily on drug traffickers. Heroin is deadly and it can easily turn into an addiction. Users say it is one of the best highs but coming down from it are nothing less than miserable and the worst feeling imaginable. When these users down receive the proper help and treatment necessary to cure them of this “disease” they have a great risk in dying.

Having lost friends to this drug and related drugs and seeing first-hand what it can do to a person (my best friend); I’ve learned that it isn’t even worth trying. Thanks to research projects like this and personal experience I know better than to jeopardize my life over a drug. I think more prevention and learning is needed in school. Programs like D.A.R.E. are good stepping stones but proper drug education should constantly be administered.

I’m not going to give you a lesson on why you shouldn’t do drugs but hopefully by this point you’ve seen in my paper the harmful effects it has on you and the people around you. Even though we may not be users, we may know someone who is or who has tried heroin and other drugs. The best way to stay drug-free is to practice a healthy life-style.

Back to Betty C. Jung’s Web site	http://www.bettycjung.net
Back to Fact Sheet Directory	http://www.bettycjung.net/Pch202fs.htm