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Title: Prescription opioids as a gateway to heroin use.

Background: Heroin use is on the rise and the demographic of heroin users has changed significantly over the past decade. Heroin is now a problem of the suburbs and middle class, stemming from a reduction in the availability of prescription opioids. Heroin may be an attractive option, or the only option, for individuals newly without access to prescription opioids. Heroin use is on the rise and the demographic of heroin users has changed significantly over the past decade. Heroin is now a problem of the suburbs and middle class, stemming from a reduction in the availability of prescription opioids. Heroin may be an attractive option, or the only option, for individuals newly without access to prescription opioids.

Aims: To determine the role of prescription opioid use in the initiation of heroin use. To determine the role of prescription opioid use in the initiation of heroin use.

Methods: We plan to do a multicenter survey among a sample of current and previous users of heroin. We will administer our surveys through methadone maintenance clinics in New York City, NY as well as safe injection sites and drug rehab programs in Vancouver, BC, Canada. Our focus will be on the users' drug history – age of first use, reasons for and timeline of opioid use, history of prescription opioid abuse, initial diagnosis given for prescription opioids, manner of obtaining opioids, age of first heroin use, and reason for initiating heroin use. We will also be collecting demographic variables including: age, gender, insurance status, annual income, highest level of education completed, and past medical and psychiatric history. We plan to do a multicenter survey among a sample of current and previous users of heroin. We will administer our surveys through methadone maintenance clinics in New York City, NY as well as safe injection sites and drug rehab programs in Vancouver, BC, Canada. Our focus will be on the users' drug history – age of first use, reasons for and timeline of opioid use, history of prescription opioid abuse, initial diagnosis given for prescription opioids, manner of obtaining opioids, age of first heroin use, and reason for initiating heroin use. We will also be collecting demographic variables including: age, gender, insurance status, annual income, highest level of education completed, and past medical and psychiatric history.

Major Limitations/Questions: The major limitation of this study is the likely small sample size. Our population may not be reflective of all heroin users, and the use of survey rather than a qualitative interview may bias the data collection. Although an electronic survey would be ideal, the population we are targeting is unlikely to have easy access to computers. The major limitation of this study is the likely small sample size. Our population may not be reflective of all heroin users, and the use of survey rather than a qualitative interview may bias the data collection. Although an electronic survey would be ideal, the population we are targeting is unlikely to have easy access to computers.