

In 2006, I had just been hired by Liberty Mutual to work in their commercial insurance division as a broker/agent. I had to take a 90-hour insurance class over a two-week period. During that time I also had oral surgery to remove a front tooth that I had insured when I was a kid. Twenty years later it caught up to me turning into a really bad infection in my upper jaw. The extraction had been excruciating. I would sit in class holding an ice-cold Coke can to my face to numb the pain. The doctor had given me a prescription of oxytocin with each pill totaling 700 mg. When I left his office that day, *“If the pain gets really bad you can take two pills instead of one. But do not do this for more than two days then that’s it!! Throw them away,”* he said. I am so glad he did because I actually started to feel a slight craving for the pills. At 1400 mg a day, it was easy. I flushed those bad boys right down the toilet.

But what happens to those who become addicted to opioids such as oxy, heroin, morphine and other narcotics? Since heroin is the most widely abused opioid, I’ll refer to that. It is very easy to become addicted and dependent on heroin. One exposure is all it takes and the dependency is so strong because users on heroin develop a tolerance very quickly. They have to keep taking more and regularly to achieve the same results as the first high. If the user takes a rest period from the drug use, when they go back and re-use injecting the same high dosage as before, the body cannot handle it and therefore death occurs.

The dangers of opioid use are death, sickness and disease. As introduced above, an overdose is the common cause of death as heroin can easily suppresses breathing and shutdowns the respiratory center in the brain. Dealers wanting to make more money sometimes add additives to the heroin. If the additive gets in the bloodstream it could form a blood clot that travels to the lungs, liver, heart or brain causing immediate death. Other dangers are skin infections and hepatitis C through the use of dirty or shared needles. HIV infection rate among users is 60% or higher. Lastly, the drug itself erodes organs, blood vessels, and linings of the heart and valves.