



The Big Lie: American Addict 2

Wednesday, January 18, 2017, at 7 p.m.
The Ray Stark Family Theatre
School of Cinematic Arts 108

Addiction in America

The Provost's Series on Wicked Problems

featuring

**Dana Goldman, Sasha Knezev,
Dr. Gregory A. Smith, and Avelardo Valdez**

Tuesday, January 24, 2017, at 7 p.m.
Friends of the USC Libraries Lecture Hall
Doheny Memorial Library 240

THE FACTS

- Drug overdose is the leading cause of injury death in the United States. From 2000 to 2014, nearly half a million Americans died of drug overdoses.
- America represents 5 percent of the world's population but consumes 50 percent of the world's prescription pills and more than 80 percent of the world's prescription narcotics.
- The nation is currently in the midst of an unprecedented epidemic of addiction to prescription opioids. Prescriptions for opioids, and deaths from opioid overdoses, have risen in parallel; there has been no related increase in American patients' reporting of pain.
- The opioid market is worth approximately \$10 billion per year in sales.
- Heroin overdoses killed more people in the U.S. than HIV, melanoma, or firearms in 2015.

THE SPEAKERS

- **DANA GOLDMAN** is a nationally recognized health economist, professor, and director of the USC Schaeffer Center for Health Policy and Economics.
- **SASHA KNEZEV** is a Serbian American filmmaker who attended the USC School of Cinematic Arts and wrote and directed *American Addict* and *The Big Lie: American Addict 2*.
- **DR. GREGORY A. SMITH, MD**, is the founder of the Comprehensive Pain Relief Group and the GS Medical Center; critical of the ways the pharmaceutical industry profits off people's pain, he has developed a comprehensive nutritional, emotional, social, and physical program to combat addiction and chronic pain.
- **AVELARDO VALDEZ** is a professor in the USC School of Social Work who researches the relationship between substance abuse and violence and health issues in high-risk groups.

WHAT IS ADDICTION?

Drug addiction is a complex, chronic, and treatable disease. It is not a matter of morality or willpower, and quitting substance use is not as simple as "just stop." Drug use changes the brain in ways that make quitting difficult even for those who want to. The mark of addiction is compulsive seeking out of the drug despite harmful consequences.

RISK FACTORS FOR ADDICTION

There is no single cause of addiction, but rather a complex set of risk factors that make some drug users more likely than others to become addicted. These include:

- genetics
- mental health
- environment: peer pressure, abuse, stress, early exposure, and other factors can influence drug use and addiction
- age: the earlier in life drug use begins, the more likely it is to progress to addiction; adolescents are especially at risk because the parts of the brain that control decision-making, judgment, and self-control are still developing

THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

The United States is in the midst of an unprecedented epidemic of addiction to prescription opioids. More people died from drug overdoses in 2014 than in any prior year on record, and more than 60 percent of these deaths involved an opioid.

Since 1999, the amount of prescription opioids sold in the U.S. has nearly quadrupled, and deaths from prescription opioids have also quadrupled. Yet there has not been an overall change in the amount of pain that Americans report having. Heroin use is also rising and is likely directly tied to the increasing rates of opioid prescriptions. Approximately 3 out of 4 new heroin users report having abused prescription opioids before starting heroin, which is more available and less expensive than prescription opioids.

ON AN AVERAGE DAY IN THE U.S.

- More than 650,000 opioid prescriptions are dispensed
- 3,900 people initiate non-medical use of an opioid
- 580 people initiate heroin use
- 90 people die from an opioid overdose

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, young adults ages 18 to 25 are the biggest abusers of prescription opioid pain relievers, ADHD stimulants, and anti-anxiety drugs. In 2014, more than 1,700 young adults died from prescription drug (mainly opioid) overdoses—more than died from overdoses of any other drug, including cocaine and heroin combined.

The epidemic affects all segments of American society. It has resulted in increased rates of early mortality among white people, especially women, and has hit particularly hard in small towns and rural areas.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND OTHER RISKS

- Drug and alcohol use is a significant risk factor for HIV. A third of the 1.2 million Americans with HIV use drugs or engage in binge drinking, and 24 percent of people with HIV are in need of substance-abuse treatment. Infection among substance users can result from both the sharing of needles *and* impaired judgment while under the influence that can lead to risky sexual behavior.
- Addiction to drugs and alcohol can lead to many other health problems, including cardiovascular disease, hepatitis, liver damage, neurological and mental-health effects, and death.
- Substance abuse is often a cause of homelessness. It can also be a *result* of homelessness, due to the extreme stress of living on the streets as well as exposure and access to drugs and alcohol.

THE “WAR ON DRUGS,” CRIMINALIZATION, AND RACE

The so-called “war on drugs,” a U.S. government policy initiated by President Nixon, aims to eradicate drug use through the criminal-legal system. The result is that about half of the people incarcerated in U.S. prisons are serving time for drug-related offenses. “Misguided drug laws and harsh sentencing requirements have produced profoundly unequal outcomes for people of color. Although rates of drug use and sales are similar across racial and ethnic lines, Black and Latino people are far more likely to be criminalized,” writes the Drug Policy Alliance. In *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander writes, “Nothing has contributed more to the systematic mass incarceration of people of color than the War on Drugs.” The vast majority of drug arrests in 2014 were for possession only.

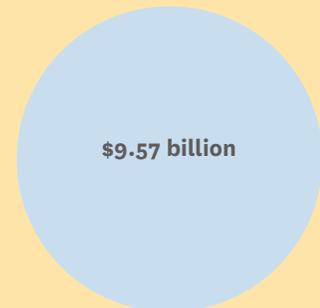
FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- Has addiction affected you or anyone close to you?
- Why do you think opioid prescriptions are increasing while patient reporting of pain is about the same?
- What possible solutions to the addiction epidemic seem most promising to you?

Drugs to treat the effects of drugs

The nearly \$9.6 billion industry around opioid pain management has begotten a number of new billion-dollar markets for addiction, overdose, and side effects such as constipation.

Opioid painkillers 2015 U.S. Sales



Drugs that treat:



Sources: IMS Health, Credence Research, Transparency Market Research, One Equity Research

DEFINITIONS

ADDICTION: compulsive, difficult-to-control use of a habit-forming drug despite harmful consequences

DEPENDENCE: adaptation to a drug that produces symptoms of withdrawal when use of the drug is stopped

OPIATE: a drug containing or derived from opium and designed to induce sleep and alleviate pain, such as opium, morphine, or heroin

OPIOID: this term is currently used to describe both opiates and synthetic drugs that mimic the effects of opiates but are not derived from opium, such as fentanyl, OxyContin, Vicodin, or Percocet

OVERDOSE: injury to the body that happens when a drug is taken in excessive amounts; can be fatal or nonfatal

RELAPSE: the return to drug use after an attempt to stop

TOLERANCE: reduced response to a drug with repeated use

TO LEARN MORE, EXPLORE THESE RESOURCES:

- ⦿ *American Addict* and *The Big Lie: American Addict 2*; available on Amazon and iTunes
- ⦿ *Dream Land: The True Tale of America's Opiate Epidemic* by Sam Quinones
- ⦿ The novel *Smashed: Story of a Drunken Girlhood* by Koren Zailckas
- ⦿ “The House” (3/31/16 episode of the NPR podcast *Embedded*), about the link between an HIV outbreak and the prescription drug Opana

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

ZOE PETTWAY UNNO, Ph.D., acting head of Science & Engineering Library, has selected the following resources to help you learn more about the themes addressed in tonight's event. Access these electronic resources through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu.

BOOKS

- ⦿ Kleiman, Mark, Jonathan P. Caulkins, and Angela Hawken. *Drugs and Drug Policy: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- ⦿ Lewis, Marc. *Memoirs of an Addicted Brain: A Neuroscientist Examines His Former Life on Drugs*. 1st ed. New York: PublicAffairs, 2012.
- ⦿ Reznicek, Michael J. *Blowing Smoke: Rethinking the War on Drugs Without Prohibition and Rehab*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012.

DATABASES AND WEBSITES

- ⦿ PsycINFO — Abstracting and indexing database with more than 3 million records devoted to peer-reviewed literature of journal articles, chapters, books, dissertations and reports in psychology, the behavioral sciences, and mental health.
- ⦿ ProQuest Psychology — This database provides abstracts and indexing for more than 640 titles, with over 540 titles available in full text. Many titles are indexed in PsycINFO.
- ⦿ “MedlinePlus — Health Information from the National Library of Medicine.” MedlinePlus — Health Information from the National Library of Medicine. Accessed January 10, 2017. <https://medlineplus.gov/>.
- ⦿ “National Institute on Drug Abuse.” National Institute on Drug Abuse. Accessed January 10, 2017. <https://www.drugabuse.gov/>.

JOURNALS

- ⦿ *Addiction*
- ⦿ *The American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*
- ⦿ *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*

