



Understanding THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC

About



Understanding the Opioid Epidemic is a one-hour PBS documentary that traces the causes behind the unprecedented growth in the use of prescription opioids and the devastating impact these drugs are having in virtually every part of America. The program captures the story of the opioid crisis through personal stories and interviews with experts.

Health care providers wrote nearly a quarter of a billion opioid prescriptions in 2013. That is enough for every adult American to have their own bottle of pain pills. Anyone who takes prescription opioids can become addicted to them.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, every day approximately 91 people in the United States die from opioid overdose.

The opioid epidemic is different from previous drug crises in the United States. There is opioid abuse, addiction and death in virtually every area of the country and opioid abuse reaches into every neighborhood and socioeconomic group. Drug overdoses have increased among men and women, all races and adults of nearly all ages.

Understanding the Opioid Epidemic reveals the tragic impact of the overuse of prescription painkillers on individuals, families and communities. They are stories that often begin with medical treatment for moderate to severe pain that evolve into drug addiction and death. In addition to the personal stories of those impacted by the opioid crisis, the documentary explores the dramatic increase in the use and acceptance of prescription painkillers and addresses possible solutions to the opioid epidemic including more non-drug treatment for pain, improved opioid prescribing, and reducing the amount of opioids produced and prescribed in America. The best solution is preventing people from becoming addicted in the first place. But there is also a critical need for more and better treatment of those already addicted to opioids.

"I think there's not more outrage because the people that are not affected don't think it's going to happen to them. That's a false sense of security... you are one car accident, one surgery, one wisdom tooth, one sports injury away from the disease of addiction."

- Julie Israel, Son died after struggle with opioid addiction



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