



Editorial

The Nightmare of the Opioid Crisis in America



With the latest series in the New York Times detailing the horrors of individual and community crises as a result of the influx and constancy of opioid use and abuse, we are again reminded of the devastation that is occurring in our homes, and our communities. Each of us can recount a story of a friend, a relative, a colleague, or a patient who has struggled with addiction to opioids. Some of these people have lost their lives, and our communities and families have lost their talents. How did we get here?

Quinones' (2015) book tracing the history of the opioid epidemic in America is a must read for all of us who continue to struggle with finding the solutions. As an investigative reporter he traces the history of to the change in advertising of medications, specifically the mass marketing of OxyContin through the pharmaceutical company, among health care providers, and ultimately to the public. As of the book's publication, OxyContin sales were estimated at more than \$35 billion since the introduction in 1996 (Quinones, 2015, p. 351).

But most importantly, Quinones addresses the epidemic as a broader social issue, one that will not be solved on the back end, through treatment and/or incarceration. Our communities must change, and of course there is some evidence of success in some cities and towns. But fundamentally we do not know what to do about the problems of addiction ravaging our towns.

One of the most memorable phrases in Quinones' book is the reference to the words of parents who had lost a son to a drug overdose. In advising all of us, including themselves, they remarked that it takes a community to raise a child. Parents cannot do it alone, nor can the

teachers or the counselors in our school systems, nor the preachers and church members. We are all in this together. We know without question the scope of the battle. We even know some of the better solutions, engagement and involvement with our children and their peers, so that they are not feeling isolated and alone. Together our society can change; we are powerful, intelligent and enterprising. This problem is worth addressing for the future of our future generations.

If you have not read Quinones' book, I would highly recommend it as a starting and end point in understanding this major health challenge. He likens the epidemic to the HIV/AIDS that for so long was ignored in our country and world. So also have we ignored the opioid epidemic that has been with us for more than two decades, the challenge that has left its toll on all of us and our communities. We know that there is research that is ongoing among our peers in psychiatric mental health nursing. We also know that many of our colleagues are involved in prevention and intervention programs to combat the addiction crisis. We encourage you to send us your papers, detailing your successes and failures as we can best learn from each other.

Reference

Quinones, S. (2015). *Dreamland: The true tale of America's opioid epidemic*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Press.

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