

Opioids – A Personal Choice

By Pete Clark

President Trump has declared Opioid addiction to be an unfunded National Crisis, as more than twenty thousand people died of prescription drug overdoses in 2015 and the toll is rising.

There are many factors driving the Opioid Addiction Epidemic, but I believe the primary driving force behind the situation is the individual lack of will power, self-control and the wish to avoid the everyday problems associated with attempting to live a full and happy life. Easily obtainable, legally prescribed Opioid pain killers are the new super highway to a carefree and pain free, if abbreviated, life.

I have spent more than half of my life fighting to survive sometimes horrendous pain and yes, I have used both Vicodin and Percocet in waging those battles. They are the least strong chemicals that will alleviate my pain. Across the years, my approach to pain has been to push it from my consciousness during the work day and release the pain after the close of the work day. Often, I would arrive home after a day's work, sit down and not be able to arise again for twenty to thirty minutes because of the pain surging throughout my body. I very seldom took pain killers during the day and tried never to take them while working. I took pain killers at bedtime, so I could get to sleep.

It is possible that I was forewarned of the dangers of Opioids by my father's experience in 1947. We were involved in a terrible automobile accident on U.S. 26 just east of Lingle, Wyoming. The doctor in Lingle was going to amputate my dad's left arm, but decided instead to send him to Natrona County Memorial Hospital in Casper, where a surgeon used grafted bone and silver wire, screws and pins to rebuild the structure of his arm. During the healing process, my Dad became addicted to Morphine. The hospital staff discovered their error when they ceased giving him Morphine and he went into withdrawal. They restarted the Morphine and gradually decreased the dosage until his addiction was gone, never to return. I never saw my Dad suffering the misery of his addiction and withdrawal. I was very young, a First Grader with a limited horizon, so I believe this incident had little effect on my outlook on drugs, both recreational and medicinal.

Other than the occasional beer, glass of wine or shot of whisky, I don't use any mood altering drugs. I have drunk my share of alcohol and know what it is to get high, but even when I was given five Vicodins to relieve my pain so I could lie still for an MRI before spinal surgery, I did not get high. In the case of Opioids, they generally do what one expects of them. How they are used is up to the individual opening the bottle.