

**Today's Presentation**

**Program:** How to Craft a Heroin Epidemic

**Speaker:** Daniel Rusyniak, M.D., Professor of Emergency Medicine, Medical Director, Indiana Poison Center, Indiana University

**Introduced by:** Marty Meisenheimer

**Attendance:** 91

**Guests:** Guest sign-in was empty. Please help us acknowledge your guests and visitors.

**Scribe:** Russell Judd

**Editor:** Carl Warner

Professor Rusyniak presented on the current opioid crisis and its evolution in the United States. Two million people are addicted to opioids. One-half million use heroin. Where the U.S. has 4.6% of the world's population, it uses 80% of the world's opioids. Hospital admission for opioid abuse increased 5 fold from 2001 to 2011.

In the 1990s most physicians were leery of prescribing opioids for patients with pain, usually giving small doses after discussing drug side effects. About 1997, however, some medical groups began recommending more liberal opioid use for chronic pain management. In 2000 the Joint Commission for Accreditation of Hospitals called for a more active approach with frequent assessment of pain level and giving opioids frequently to avoid pain. As a result, the use for opioids increased from 1997 to 2006, and admissions for drug overdose climbed. Also, collateral involvement of teens and young children occurred as they were finding drugs in their parent's home. In Tennessee, there was a 10 fold increase of sick babies born to addicted mothers.

This early and more liberal use of opioids didn't improve pain management. Experimentally, it seems that heroin use causes hyperalgesia and increases the appetite for heroin. It does the same in humans.

To combat this crisis, states have enacted rules and guidelines to counter overprescribing. There has been a lot of advertisement about these guides. Opioid use has decreased, but heroin use has soared. Heroin is cheap and readily available.

Naloxone is life saving for an overdosed addict. It needs to be in the hands of first responders. Needle exchange programs are important too; 30% of users are Hepatitis C positive. Our thanks to Dr. Rusyniak for a stunningly relevant talk.



**Daniel Rusyniak, M.D.**