



# DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Dale J Schmidt Sheriff   Scott Smith Chief Deputy

## March Sheriff's Column – Heroin Still a Problem, but Beware of Methamphetamine

Over the last couple years you have heard me and others talk about heroin and opiate addiction and the devastation it has had on Dodge County families. In various presentations I've given on the heroin and opiate epidemic, I have laid out typical events that lead to someone becoming an opiate addict. Unfortunately, we must continue that conversation as the problem has not diminished.

So how does one become a heroin addict? You may think that heroin addicts typically just pick up the drug one day and begin using. More often than not, that is not how one becomes an addict. There are a variety of ways people become addicted but most commonly opiate addicted individuals begin with prescription medications. Opiate prescription medications include painkillers such as OxyContin, Oxycodone, Vicodin or Fentanyl.

During my career I have come into contact with a number of these individuals who told me their problem began after some sort of sports injury or other physical ailment that required pain medication. The individuals either received a prescription from their doctor or used someone else's prescription as a means to manage the pain. Unfortunately, it isn't long until that addiction sets in as these drugs are highly addictive.

So how does one transition from prescription pills to heroin? Many times after a prescription has run out, those who are addicted attempt to purchase these same pills on the street. They soon learn that the cost of prescription pills from those who deal them can be about 3 to 4 times the cost of a dose of heroin. Simple economics and the fact that the opiate drugs are so highly addictive take over and heroin use begins.

So what can we as a community do to help addicted individuals? First, we must continue to educate not only our youth, but people of all ages about the dangers that exist, warning signs for families and the resources available to help. At the same time we must continue enforcement efforts in an effort to minimize the supply available while providing a form of deterrence to the dealers who bring these drugs into our community.

Unfortunately, we must also be aware of another drug that is making its way into Dodge County. Methamphetamine is creeping in as an alternative to heroin. This is an interesting transition as the two drugs have entirely different effects on the human body. Heroin has a tendency to slow down the body's processes, including heart rate and blood pressure. As a result eventually heroin begins to shut the body's systems down which is a major factor in the overdoses that we have seen leading to death. Methamphetamine, on the other hand, is a stimulant and speeds up the body's systems and is a reason

why the drug got the nickname “speed”. It has been said that this transition is taking place as users are afraid of the very real dangers of an overdose death caused by heroin.

Methamphetamine, however, brings an entirely different set of challenges and health complications. From the law enforcement standpoint, methamphetamine is known for causing individuals who are using to have violent tendencies they normally would not have if they were clean. Methamphetamine also quickly decays health and quality of life leading to a host of other issues.

While it is not my intent to scare anyone, it is my intent to educate. This is not simply a law enforcement problem but a community problem. We must all pull together in combating these issue so that we can improve the quality of life for all citizens in Dodge County and maintain a safe and enjoyable place to live, work and visit.

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