

Addiction and Drugs: How It Gets You Hooked

By: Saurin Gandhi August 25, 2011



The history behind drug use in this country is quite the see-saw. If you look into our past, some decades it is okay to use a certain drug, some decades it isn't. That has continued throughout history and can be seen with the large number of commercials that associated previous medications with premature death in a number of individuals. Although the each decade had their own fair share of drug addiction, (60s were dedicated to marijuana and psychedelics, the 70s had rampant use of cocaine, the 80s to NMDA) the drugs that are causing the most concern today actually are prescription medications. Now as a clarification, in this case I will be focusing on legal drugs, rather than illegal ones. When it comes to prescription medication, new discoveries made by pharmaceutical researchers fail to help in controlling prescription medications already on the streets. Effective medications are replaced by new, "more" effective ones and the process continues while the pharmaceutical companies reap the rewards from the honest American's paycheck. The mindset

in the pre 1900s was one of hope and "inherent health." Healthcare was explained sufficiently by an agent having attacked, the healthy body trying to ward off the agent (causing symptoms) and eventually with a little help of modern medicine, the healthy body destroying the pathogen and the body returning to normal. This mindset changed drastically post 1900s into one of "inherent illness." Idealized by the Kupfer curve, there is a line in which you can cross from having a symptom, and having a syndrome. Normalcy is in quotation marks as though it is an "idealized" state and to return to normalcy you have to take medication, and stay on that medication to prevent getting ill again. The question is not really whether one will slide down into the syndrome, but rather when it is going to happen. Now I'm not trying to give you a history lesson here, but it is essential you know the background of how drugs entered and remained a "quick fix" for millions of Americans. In the following article I will be investigating addictions stemming from misguided healthcare and how the body physiologically becomes addicted.

Drugs on Drugs...on Drugs:

In some cases, when you visit a doctor, the medication prescribed to you may not be the best one actually for you. Now as an aspiring doctor, I can say that it is not the case for most doctors, but be wary for those select few that seem to always prescribe the same medication to patients. Fact is that pharmaceutical companies have a large influence on doctors, let alone the government. When it comes to prescribing medication, there is a lot of money to be made and indulging a few doctors in benefits in order to give speeches and talks about a specific pharmaceutical company product is a small price to pay for the sheer amount of money made by selling the medications. As a fact, in 2005, Americans spent a whopping **\$250 BILLION** on prescription drugs. That is more than what Americans spent on gasoline and 2x as much as was spent on higher education. To put it in perspective, the amount Americans spent on prescription medication is greater than what the following countries spent, **COMBINED: Japan, Germany, France, Italy, Spain, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina.** When it comes to your health, it is extremely important to ask your doctor whether he is affiliated with the product he is prescribing to you. Under law, he cannot lie about that, and while you may not think it is a big deal, there may be a better medication out there for you. In order for you to see how influential the pharmaceutical companies are on a growing basis, I will throw out



some numbers that may shock you.

- In 2004, 11% of Americans were on cholesterol lowering medication, 40% over the age 50.
- In 2002, 1 in 10 women were on antidepressants.
- In 2004, **1 in 3** doctor visits prescribed **antidepressants**.
- In 2002, 7% of children were on antidepressants, and 1 in 7 was on stimulants (ADD).
- In 2006, the **AVERAGE AMERICAN** prescribed and took **12 DIFFERENT PRESCRIPTIONS**.
- Experts estimate that **100,000** die not from the disease the medicine is trying to alleviate, but rather from the adverse effects of the drug in question.

How Big is Big Pharma?

Big Pharma is the single most influential force on Americans. They built the most profitable industry, they spend more time lobbying in government than any other industry, and there seems to be no stop to their creation of “lifestyle drugs” rather than drugs that can actually save people. Patients are getting information about the drugs by the ones selling it and as one of the only nations that allows for prescription medication to be advertised on television, America has a growing problem with patients developing an addiction to them. They have about 1 drug salesperson for every 6 MDs and during a 30 minute segment of news, on average, there are 6 drug commercials. This is how patients are becoming customers, medicines are becoming commodities, and how the treatment of the suffering has become profitable.



How Drugs Get You Hooked

The fundamental series of events for any addiction is as follows:

1. You take a drug (legal or illegal).
2. The drug acts on your pleasure receptors, for example, dopamine receptors.
3. Continued use results in your body believing that it is the source of what is stimulating the receptors, thus it slows down its own production.
4. The delicate mechanism of nerve processing becomes adjusted and tolerance increases.
5. Once you stop taking the drug, your body is deprived of what was causing the euphoria and wants the feeling even more (withdrawal).
6. Withdrawal leads to addiction as you resume the drug in order to stay “normal.”

The Pharmaceutical Paradigm

The pharmaceutical paradigm is a commonly used phrase that summarizes drug use irony. The reason we take drugs is to lengthen and improve life, but eventually staying on drugs becomes normal (needed). This paradigm that causes millions of Americans to become addicted has no solution other than educated healthcare systems that are not prone to distributing drug cocktails to their patients. It is quite interesting but increasing amounts of psychiatrists are prescribing combinations of drugs (cocktails) in order to combat the first medication prescribed. The solution lies in holistic and alternative treatment which focuses on your body healing your body, before prescribing you an effective, non-eternal specific drug.

The Placebo Effect

I'm sure you have heard of it, the placebo effect. The placebo effect is when a doctor gives you prescription pills for your illness in a clinical trial that is nothing less than a sugar pill. When you swallow it, you can't tell the difference. Numerous studies show that patients given the placebo rather than the actual prescription medication have the same if not better results in combating the original illness. A story I once heard in a medical

anthropology class was that there was an old man who was terminally ill (going to die) within 6 weeks. His doctor tried an experiment (the ethical details are hazy) where he pretended that there was a breakthrough medication that would save him. Believing his doctor, he took the fake medication pills and within two weeks he was back on his feet and approaching his life optimistically. A year later, an article came out regarding the specific medication given to him, and he realized that there was no cure to his disease. He became extremely ill again until his doctor told him there was a mistake and all he needed was an increase in the dosage. He began again and lived another two years before he actually passed away. It was the power of suggestion at work and if you research online about instances like these, many people have their issues solved by convincing their body that it has been solved. I am not saying to stop taking all medications, all I am saying is sometimes, try to trick your mind into thinking its fixing its own problems before you set your eyes on the pill.

**Closing Remarks:**

An interesting story about how a 'disease' was created revolves around Detrol. The pharmaceutical company Merck admitted to creating this disease that did not exist. The disease was overactive bladder in the elderly and soon popularity allowed it spread into the younger communities. Research about Detrol and you will realize how the pharmaceutical companies tend to create diseases, striking fear in weary Americans and making them feel like they need to buy "lifestyle" drugs to ease their normal, everyday stresses and problems. It is quite interesting!

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