

The Enemy:

Opiate addiction (Goal 4) and specifically Black Tar Heroin (Goal 4a)

Description:

But why Opiates?: They are available as excess to sell by the prescription owner and easy to get a hold of. But why Black Tar Heroin?: The cost is very cheap from as little as \$9.00 - \$10.00 per balloon. This compares to \$80.00 per prescription pill of OxyContin - essentially 8 balloons of Heroin for one OxyContin pill. But why here?: The Black Tar Heroin is marketed in communities the size of Charlotte (small to mid-sized cities compared to Miami or NY) because of the smaller number of law enforcement and prosecution teams. Also, large municipalities have a higher number of international flights/travel where Brown Powder or "White" Heroin (found in "Bindle" sizes) at the cost of \$15.00 - \$20.00 is imported from overseas. Black Tar Heroin is black because it is not as refined and therefore retains some of the harmful bacteria and poses an additional risk when injected. Undercover Detective CMPD

Because of its chemical structure, heroin penetrates the brain more quickly than other opiates, which is probably why many addicts prefer heroin. <http://www.opiates.com/opiates/>.

Costs to Society/Individual:

Prosecution: An individual can be charged for trafficking narcotics when possessing as little as 4 grams of Opiates. This includes possessing one bottle of prescription drugs without having a prescription if the contents within the bottle add up to 4 grams. It may take up to 30 grams of an opiate substance to get a conviction but an individual is risking conviction whenever they are charged.

Incarceration: If convicted for level one trafficking, an individual faces from 70 to 84 months of lock down.

Dysfunctional Individuals: Once addicted, very few individuals are ever able to function productively again. The success rate for treatment of Heroin addicts is very low. *"I know hundreds of people who have used heroin but I know of only one who is free of the addiction."* Undercover Detective for CMPD

Medical Services Costs

Detoxification Costs

Death

HIV/AIDs, Hepatitis and other infectious diseases: Those who end up using/abusing Heroin operate in dirty environments that are filled with used needles and syringes and are prone to reuse these items thereby exposing them to infectious diseases.

Emerging Threat Statistics: See Adam Report. *"As early as 2004, there may have been 2 arrests for prosecution in the county and it increased to as many as 10 by 2006. But now in 2010 there are as many prosecutions for Opiates as any of the other drugs and it is in the hundreds."* ADA Mecklenburg County *"2007 we saw 3 overdoses and 0 deaths; 2008 we saw 8 overdoses and 1 death; 2009 we saw 44 overdoses and 12 deaths and in 2010 we are running at about the same rate as last year with the overdoses but the number of deaths was only 1 (but 6*

were brought back from clinical death). I think there are a few factors as to why the number of deaths is less for 2010. Life saving intervention happens earlier due to: 1) the users are less afraid to call EMS when early signs of problems are seen and as a result Narcan and other treatments are administered earlier and clinical death is impeded; 2) Friends are actually doing CPR on their friends. We set a record this year with a bust in the amount of 17 pounds of Heroin." Undercover Detective for CMPD

User Groups: From the Adam report: The age of arrestees experiencing a dramatic rise in testing positive for Opiates are within the <21 to 35 Year Olds. White arrestees are more than 8 times higher to test positive for Opiates than African Americans or Hispanics. "The user groups by race, in my opinion, are essentially the same as the demographic percentages by race throughout the community. But the arrest rate is higher for Caucasians than others because they seem to be less careful about where they use the drug...it might be just down the block from where the purchase was made rather than in the privacy of their home which is more common for other race groups. The individual uses in their car or a restroom and passes out or otherwise becomes incapacitated and a citizen will place a call to the police regarding a parked car or an individual that is passed out...therefore their arrest rate is higher. Mexican Mafia suppliers did not usually sell to African Americans but now the 'marketing' has changed and the suppliers are now selling to higher end re-sellers who have no problem selling to an African American customer. The 'Sweet Spot' user groups are those within the 18 to 27 age range but younger users as early as 16 are starting to be involved. Also, some users by 36 or so become a maintenance user at 2 to 3 balloons a day." Undercover Detective for CMPD

Suppliers/Sellers/Routes: "There are basically two 'families' (Mexican Mafia) who supply black tar heroin from Mexico. The route includes but is not limited to: Mexico through Los Angeles to Seattle to Denver to Nashville to Charlotte. These people are not gang members such as MS13 and there is, up to now, no evidence of violence between suppliers or sellers. There is, however, evidence of violence coming from the users. (See additional Key Informant Interview remarks at the end) The sellers must demonstrate to their suppliers that their drug use will not interfere with their selling of the product. Also, the sellers will typically buy older age vehicles, operate out of an unfurnished apartment and may receive \$700.00/week as well as medical coverage for payment and have a quota to sell of perhaps 16 grams/day. They will introduce new users by offering them the best stuff at the cheapest price. These networks are set up to retain customers and the sellers will maintain extensive contact lists. The seller will also extend follow-up calls to the buyer to inquire on what they thought of the drugs and how they were doing and when they would need more. Also, sellers have stated that their customers are coming from all over (e.g. Gastonia, etc.) and buy large quantities. Undercover Detective for CMPD

Users Introduced to Black Tar Heroin: "Some users are introduced to Black Tar Heroin after becoming addicted to Opiate pills - especially the younger kids who start out on OxyContin. The pills are not seen as risky as Heroin and are purchased from any individual who needs/wants to have a little income and sell off their excess prescription. Once the user is addicted, they need to seek out similar substances to meet the addictive craving. The black tar heroin is very affordable compared to other forms of opiates and if available becomes the drug of choice.

(See Progression of Use) Other users are already using other drugs (e.g. Marijuana) and it is offered to them as a new high and as something different from the original Heroin and therefore not as dangerous. (See Progression of Use) Other users who didn't even have a history of drug use and again it is introduced to them as something different from the regular Heroin and therefore not as dangerous. (See Progression of Use)" Undercover Detective for CMPD

Progression of Use: *"Because of the stigma and fear of needles a new user may put some on marijuana and smoke it or heat it up on a piece of foil and inhale the resulting smoke. Later, still staying away from needles, they will create a mist and spray into their nasal cavities to be absorbed in this highly vascular area but the effect is not as intense as injection. As they continue to chase a better 'high' they will try injecting the substance intramuscularly which can also result in the breakdown of the flesh due to infection. After becoming used to needles – they will cross over to injecting intravenously" Undercover Detective for CMPD*

ADA Additional Key Informant Remarks: *"Pills are not considered as lethal as Heroin and people are more likely to be open to using them. We are seeing a large increase with this issue. A year ago the undercover detective briefed my ADA staff and they were very interested in this information...people are interested because is it a unique dangerous problem...so others could be interested about it as well. Currently the budget is so tight that we do not have the funds to make referrals for those who are addicts. Heroin users do not seem to recover from these addictions and in addition to being incarcerated for a long time– they subject themselves to a life-long addiction...something that will never go away. This is a unique issue facing our area as evidenced by the PD, DA and the government officials are coming to the CMDFC for help. One mother actually said that she wished her child was addicted to marijuana or cocaine versus being addicted to Heroin. A couple of ideas that I would offer: 1) Work with the EMS and increase awareness of the issue; 2) Work with Doctors to further restrict access to Opiates and 3) Have rich kids who are addicted to the substance speak to groups of rich kids about using"*

Undercover Detective Additional Key Informant Remarks: *"We are not winning this one. I feel as though this is the next storm right off the coast and it is coming in fast. It is an insidious drug that is coming in under the radar. Kids are getting used to this Heroin. There is great Parental denial that 'my kid is not an addict'. I believe there are three elements: 1) Law Enforcement-increase their awareness of this issue in the community and continue to work towards decreasing supply ; 2) Clinical/Pharmaceutical/Rehab – slow down the amount of Opiates available and somehow address the high cost of intervention medications and 3) Parental/Community. Since realistically we can expect that a thousand are going to continue to use...how do we stop the next thousand users? Some real world stories:*

- *One daughter was receiving 2 thousand dollars per month from her parents as they thought it was expensive to drive her Escalade. The young teenager wasted all of the money on Heroin and was arrested for stealing.*
- *A 3rd year Chapel Hill student was introduced to Black Tar Heroin as "not the same stuff as the regular Heroin". He became addicted, dropped out of college and faced huge educational debt that he could not pay off and ended up on the streets.*

- *A couple (girl -17/boy-18) decided that they would plan a way to get all of the Black Tar Heroin from their seller. She was going to grab the seller by the back of the head from the back seat and her accomplice would take the steak knife (that they bought on the way) and slit the seller's throat and stab him in the heart to kill him. They did this and left with all of his money and drugs.*