



Monday through Friday
8:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M.

Saturdays & Holidays
9:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

Sundays & Christmas
Noon to 4:00 P.M.

IT'S ABOUT PAIN

A monthly service of Kirkpatrick Family Care

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HOMELESSNESS AND OPIOIDS

Seattle's KOMO TV station recently broadcast an hour long documentary called "Seattle is dying." It is worth an hour of your time, and you can find it on YouTube, or by accessing it at komotv.com.

In summary, the city of Seattle has spent more than one billion dollars to help their Homeless Problem, and it's only gotten worse. In terms of property crimes, Seattle is the 2nd worst city in the USA.

Seattle's homeless are camping on streets and in parks in Seattle as a consequence of their drug addiction. It's so powerful that they live in squalor in order to continue their (mainly) heroin use.

I mention this mess because the carnage often becomes a reason to further restrict pain patients' ability to get their medication, largely by making doctors afraid to prescribe.

Several cities in our state are suing the Purdue Frederick Pharmaceutical Company, makers of OxyContin, and alleging that THAT DRUG has caused those municipalities to spend countless money to deal with crises like the homeless situation in Seattle. As an aside, the Schlacter Family, owners of Purdue Frederick, are going bankrupt. This is a shame because the family members are among the most generous philanthropists in the world.

I digress. Sorry. Back to the KOMO documentary. These homeless people in Seattle are not living on the streets because of loss of jobs, costly divorces, fires, or other misfortunes. They are addicted to heroin.

What to do? Reporter Eric Johnson cites a program in Providence, Rhode Island. The police and courts there actually enforce laws against defecating and urinating in the streets, camping on public property, shoplifting, petty theft, possession/use of meth and heroin, and assault that are so common in these homeless encampments. Those arrested are not given a free pass, as in Seattle. They are convicted and sentenced to jail or rehab. And 93% of those folks stay sober and clean, and return to productive relationships and employment. They praise the system that DID NOT ENABLE THEM, but rather incarcerated them long enough to get clean/sober, and then utilized consultation and methadone or suboxone or vivitrol to keep them away from heroin.

As I see it, a very small portion of opioid overdose deaths are due to accidental overdose with prescription drugs. The main cause is heroin and carfentanyl. Some of the deaths from prescription drugs are related to high-seeking and some are intentional overdoses; very few are accidents.

For recreational users of opioids, we need incarceration to get them clean and then outpatient treatments to keep them clean while they rehabilitate job skills and patch up interpersonal relationships.

For patients with pain, we need new approaches to pain management (such as more treatments aimed at the location of origin of pain, rather than meds that act on brain pain receptors). What public policy is doing now is counterproductive.



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