

Testimony of

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July 31, 2007

"ENSURING THE DEATH AND SERIOUS INJURY ARE MORE THAN A BUSINESS COST: OXYCONTIN AND DEFECTIVE PRODUCTS"

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Good afternoon Chairman Leahy and members of the Senate Committee. I am honored to be here today to speak to you on behalf of the Philadelphia Police Department. I will speak to you on the devastation caused by OxyContin on family, friends and our communities.

My current assignment is with the Philadelphia Police Department, Narcotics Bureau's Drug Education Program entitled, "H.E.A.D.S.-U.P." (Heroin, Education and Dangerous Substance Understanding Program). The Heads-up Program has joined together law enforcement, family members, who have lost their loved ones, and the recovering community.

Since its inception, the Heads-up Programs has been viewed by approximately 449,000 people at 3,032 locations, and has been shown across Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Massachusetts and Connecticut. The program has for the past six and a half (6 1/2) years exposed me to a completely different aspect of law enforcement, the education side; the education, of not only law enforcement officers but of the general public so they can better understand the devastation that is caused by drug addiction, is of the utmost importance.

Abuse of OxyContin is a problem that we (as Police Officers) cannot arrest our way out of. It will require primarily education, along with treatment and enforcement. We must educate the children before they pick up that drug because after that, we're just simply playing catch up.

I am inspired every day to continue the Heads-up Program. I often listen to story after story of how addictive OxyContin is. The story seems to stay the same but the faces continue to change. Whether black, white, Hispanic or Asian, no matter what religion or political party, OxyContin has crossed all boundaries.

It seems that among our young people, "Prescription Drugs" namely, OxyContin, which is one of the most commonly abused by teens, just sounds safe and yet the progression from OxyContin to Heroin is a very common one.

One young lady's story always comes to mind. She stated that she started using Percocet at the age of 13, she couldn't get Percocet one night and someone suggested OxyContin. Then one night she didn't have enough money to get OxyContin, so she tried Heroin, and as she says, "That's when her life changed forever". At 18 years of age she is now in treatment because of one little pill. But so many more are not as fortunate.

The abuse numbers are chilling - OxyContin addiction has increased dramatically over the past ten (10) years by 300 % in the United States alone.

In 2006, this past year's abuse of OxyContin among 8th graders exactly doubled - increasing 100 % over the last four (4) years (MTF 2006 - From 1.3 % in 2002 to 2.6 % in 2006). Fifty-six percent (56%) of teens agreed that prescription drugs are easier to get than illegal drugs.

I could spend the next five (5) hours talking about statistics, 300 %, 100 %, 56 %, etc. But today I would like to concentrate on the number "One". Over the past 6 ½ years I have met countless families who have lost a son, a daughter, a husband or a mother, and what I know is 300 %, 100 %, 56 % means nothing. The only thing that matters is that "One". The "One" who is and will always be missing from that family due to OxyContin addiction or overdose.

Because of these addictions, we continue to meet family after family who live everyday thinking about what it would be like if their loved ones were still here; always asking, "Who would they be today?"

The "cost" I believe you'll never be able to measure. The son who died from the OxyContin overdose might have held the cure for cancer; the daughter will never be able to walk down the aisle with her father. A father, who was selling OxyContin is sitting in prison, and the mother who was originally prescribed OxyContin because of her pain from a car accident, is now addicted and can no longer care for her own children.

Too many people realize too late that OxyContin abuse could lead to incredible losses. Lost family, lost friends, lost jobs, lost opportunities, and lost lives either to a life-long addiction or overdose.

The 634.5 million in fines and three (3) executives who have pled guilty for "Misbranding" the drug as a "low-risk" painkiller will never equal the "One" who has been lost to these addictions or the overdoses. For that "One", who is lost has affected a whole family, a whole community, a whole generation.

There are many faces and stories that have been entrusted to the "Heads-up" Program. The only hope is that somehow "One" story, or "One" face will somehow save another from the pain and the never-ending heartache that comes with addiction; because DEAD is DEAD whether it comes at the hands of Illegal drugs or Prescription drugs like OxyContin.

I hope my testimony today has somehow helped. It was truly an honor to appear before this committee.

Thank you for your attention and I will be available to answer any follow-up questions.