



Humanizing The Addict

Some Facts about Opioids in Ohio and the U.S.

- Over 72,000 Americans died of a drug overdose in 2017; two-thirds of these deaths resulted from the use of illicit or prescription opioids. To put this into perspective, nearly 50,000 individuals died per year at the height of the HIV epidemic in the United States.
- In 2017, there were around 58 opioid prescriptions written for every 100 Americans.
- More than 17% of Americans had at least one opioid prescription filled, with an average of 3.4 opioid prescriptions dispensed per patient.
- About 80 percent of people who use heroin first misused prescription opioids.
- Opioid abuse grew significantly in 2017 in the over 65 population.
- Drug overdose is now the leading cause of death for Americans under the age of 50; overall life expectancy has declined for the last two years in a row.
- About an equal number of overdoses occur in urban and rural areas, but overdoses are increasingly more quickly in rural areas. Source:
- $\frac{2}{3}$ of drug overdoses in 2017 were among males; $\frac{1}{3}$ occurred in females.
- Opioid overdoses are higher among white Americans, but are increasing faster among nonwhite populations.
- Ohio is one of top five states with the highest rates of opioid overdose.
- The rate is more than double the national rate.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control, National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Reading: “The Addict, A Human Being” by Stephanie Kendrick

When I think about the women
who make it to us
who make it
through detox, still willing
I am scared.

Not of them, they will resist
losing control (who wouldn't?)
They will not trust others
(they have been hurt too much)

They will take note of what we say
then cry when waking
from dreams so vivid they swear
they smell the heroin burning
through their pillow. Some will run

and some too fast and when I think
about those women
I am terrified
and sad.

And tonight after working with these women
I might pour a 2nd (maybe 3rd) glass
and remember that I've been hurt (too much)
and I am not so different from them.

Stephanie Kendrick

These Community Conversations are funded by the Ohio Humanities Council. For further information, as well as information on rules for use, please see OpioidsOhio.org.