

**The following is an excerpt from a December 5, 2008 *U.S. News and World Report* online article: "Heroin Hits the Suburbs Hard Amid Wave of Drug Abuse by Teens and 20-Somethings."**

"A wave of teens and 20-somethings in suburbs across the Northeast...are becoming addicted to and dying from abuse of heroin and prescription opiates like OxyContin. Once prevalent mostly in big cities, heroin has been spreading out to smaller towns in New England and the mid-Atlantic as the drug is becoming more widely available in a highly pure, inexpensive form that can be snorted. Many of these young addicts get started on prescription drugs, move on to cheap heroin that can be snorted, and end up injecting it for a more potent high. Either way, the effects have been deadly. In Massachusetts, for example, the number of opiate-related deaths, which include overdoses and fatal drug interactions, among people ages 13 to 30 was five times as great in 2006 as it was in 1997. And according to drug intelligence, law enforcement, and treatment officials at both the federal and state level, the trend has not yet shown signs of reversing or slowing down.

"Parents in these suburban areas don't realize how frequently prescription opiate abuse is leading to heroin. An annual survey by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that 2.1 million people ages 12 or older who tried an illicit drug for the first time in 2007 chose prescription pain relievers, 57,000 more than the number who tried marijuana."

"When OxyContin users exhaust their finances or opportunities to steal from medicine cabinets, they become shrewd consumers. They can either purchase a single OxyContin pill for up to \$80 or spend as little as \$5 on a bag with one tenth of a gram of heroin. Both options offer a comparable high, and because heroin no longer carries the stigma of a drug that users must inject, the decision to graduate to heroin is an all-too-easy one."