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# THE HORROR OF DOPE

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Thousands of teen-agers are buying narcotics from peddlers. This article points out the signs of drug addiction and tells what parents can do

**O**UR teen-agers are menaced by a danger more deadly than the H bomb. Today the spine-chilling term "drug addict" can be applied to thousands of youngsters. Estimates of 50,000 to 300,000 young victims, living chiefly in our larger cities, suggest a nationwide epidemic; of the 4,000 addicts admitted to the United States Public Health Service Hospital at Lexington, Kentucky, last year, 18% were under 21. *Only six years ago the figure was 3%.*

Angry and frightened, Chicago, New York, Detroit, and Los Angeles are taking stringent law-enforcement measures to cope with the problem.

What makes our teen-agers such easy prey? In the opinion of Dr. Victor H. Vogel, medical officer in charge at Lexington, "They are just pleasure-seeking kids who were following the fashion of the school or the community and tragically found, after using heroin, that they had a wildcat by the tail and couldn't let go. When asked if they would still have experimented with heroin if they had known that they would get hooked, they said, 'Of course not,' and I believe many of them."

### HOW DRUG ADDICTION STARTS

**D**OPE, according to Webster, is "any preparation, as of opium, used to stupefy." Heroin—an opium derivative—can no longer be imported legally into this country because the medical profession found it has no special advantage over morphine, and it offers greater addiction hazards. Heroin must be smuggled into the United States. A white powder, heroin looks as innocent as dried milk, but it takes only 14 days to a month for a user of heroin to turn into an addict.

A drug addict is a person who has developed a dependence upon a drug so that he cannot voluntarily stop taking it. He needs several doses a day to prevent the unbearable suffering he feels when the drug is withdrawn.

Youthful heroin addicts start with marijuana. They take a drag on a reefer, a marijuana cigarette, because they think they can get away with it. Then they usually want a bigger boot and make themselves fair game for the heroin seller, or pusher.

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## The horror of dope

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Many pushers were once thrill-seeking kids themselves; now they are addicts who support their expensive habit of taking dope by selling it. These addicts are only too glad to pass out free samples,

### What every parent should know about dope

EVERY parent should recognize six signs that point to a youngster's drug addiction: (1) He becomes sleepy, apathetic, secretive, cranky, and unreliable. (2) He loses interest in schoolwork, hobbies, and sports. (3) He locks himself in the bathroom for long periods. (4) He takes articles of value from the home. (5) He wants to quit school, and usually does. (6) His arms may be covered with the marks of a hypodermic needle.

and to jeer at any show of reluctance by taunts of "chicken" or "square."

After the first vomiting attack, sniffing heroin gives a youngster a big bang. But it doesn't take long before he shifts to injections, because he must have more and bigger shots to give him anything like the pleasure he felt at first. Then he suddenly finds that instead of having fun he merely becomes groggy from heroin and must continue to take it if he is to live with any degree of comfort. Without his four to six or more shots a day he suffers horrible pain. Now he will probably do anything to get dope. Since heroin costs at least \$10 a day, a boy usually turns to stealing from his family, then to more serious theft; a girl, to shoplifting or prostitution.

#### PROMPT TREATMENT NECESSARY

THE sooner these youngsters come to the attention of the juvenile authorities, the more fortunate they are, because their only chance of recovery depends upon prompt treatment at our Government hospital at Lexington, Kentucky, or the one at Fort Worth, Texas.

The shortest time for treatment at either of these hospitals is four and a half months. Their overcrowded condition is a handicap because teen-agers are thrown into contact with older addicts who have a lifetime history of treatment and relapses. Aside from this unfortunate situation the outlook for youngsters is hopeful.

Because these teen-agers did not commit themselves, they must stay in the hospital until they are discharged. Unlike older addicts many of them have not yet acquired personality difficulties serious enough to demand intensive psychiatric treatment. The majority began their criminal activities to get money for nar-

cotics only after they became addicts. With help they have a good chance of becoming self-respecting young people.

Toward this goal of self-respect the hospital at Lexington bends great effort. After the harrowing 10-day period of withdrawal the patient begins to convalesce. Psychiatrists, medical officers, and members of an excellent education department work with patients; and healthful work, sports, and recreation hasten recovery.

Patients and former patients from Lexington have recently started their own

### What every teen-ager should know about dope

1. The old saying "Tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you what you are" might well be paraphrased as "Tell me who your heroes are and I'll tell you who you are."

Whom do you admire? Whom would you like to be like and what would you like to be? If you admire a great statesman, writer, artist, surgeon, scientist, or Olympic champion, and have constructive goals toward which you are working, your chances of being a fine person are excellent.

But if you have a sneaking admiration for criminals who don't get caught, or for some notorious glamor boy or girl, you'd better overhaul your thinking before it's too late.

2. Take a long hard look at anyone who offers you marijuana cigarettes. This is a practice that will add up to only one thing in your life—suffering and disgrace. To convince yourself of this, you have only to wait awhile and see what happens to those who go in for reefers and heroin. When people experiment with dynamite, the chances are they'll be blown to bits. You are no different in this respect from other people.

3. Life has many thrills in store for you: The thrill of achievement; the thrill of making friends you enjoy and admire; the thrill of love, marriage, parenthood. All these add up to infinite satisfaction. Taking drugs is a short-term thrill that can bring only untold suffering and degradation.

group therapy based upon the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. Narcotics Anonymous now has groups in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, and in Vancouver, Canada.

Such organizations or some other form of follow-up, plus greatly enlarged hospital space to care for drug victims, are essential. But because dope traffic has grown into a highly organized business,

we must enlarge our narcotics squads and make stricter drug laws and enforce them so as to clean out the pushers and the entire dope hierarchy.

Parents must realize that the first inoculation center against vice, crime, and other antisocial behavior is the home. There a child learns what is good for himself, his family, and society. He acquires his sense of values from happy and loving relationships with his parents and from the standards that surround him.

If you suspect that your child is an addict, and your family doctor confirms it, go to the local police. Fear for the family name must be put aside for the more important duty of ridding the family and community of a dangerous source of infection—the person who sold your youngster drugs.

Neither the family nor the family doctor is equipped to help an addict. He must be sent to a Federal hospital that specializes in narcotics addiction. Applications should be addressed to: **Medical Officer in Charge, United States Public Health Service Hospital**, and be sent to **Lexington, Kentucky**, or **Fort Worth, Texas**.

The teen age brings glandular changes and increased excitability. Emotional instability is one of the main reasons why teen-agers are easy picking for dope pushers. Teen-agers often need help in finding healthy outlets for their emotions and in acquiring constructive goals.

Youth is the great strength of any nation. American youth that is fine, responsible, and bighearted can help make a world of hope and freedom—the kind of world we all want to live in. ##



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Dr. Robert V. Seliger** is a fellow of the American Psychiatric Association, chief psychiatrist of the Neuropsychiatric Institute of Baltimore, executive director of the National Committee on Alcoholism, medical consultant of the Canadian National Committee for Education of Alcoholism, and a member of the Committee on Crime Prevention of the American Prison Association. He is the author of three books—"Alcoholics Are Sick People," "A Guide on Alcoholism for Social Workers," and "Psychiatry for You."

Dr. Seliger was born in New York City in 1900 and now lives in Maryland, where he is an assistant in neurology at Johns Hopkins University Medical School.