

Princess Dies of Overdose
An Affluent Affliction?

Carol is not alone in her dependence on prescription drugs. In June 2001, Princess Leila Pahlavi, 31-year old daughter of the late Shah of Iran, was found dead from an overdose of the barbiturate Seconal. An inquest heard how Leila took 40 tablets of the sedative Rohypnol every night – 20 times the recommended limit – plus 30 different sleeping pills during the day.

Her GP, Dr Mangad Iqbal, who had prescribed the drugs, was found guilty of serious professional misconduct. 'I didn't suspect she was a drug addict,' he stated. 'You normally see signs in a drug user's mannerisms, speech and body language – but she was so positive and glamorous.'

Indeed, this new type of drug addict tends to be far removed from the stereotypical junkie – many are bright, young middle-class professionals, living affluent lifestyles. And it's not just prescription drugs that can lead to addiction. It's surprisingly easy to get hooked on over-the-counter (OTC) drugs too.

Having beaten a 16-year dependency on cough medicine, former policeman David Grieve founded Over-Count, an information and advice agency for those addicted to OTC drugs. Since it was set up, 11,000 people have contacted the group – and that figure is rising by 1,500 a year.

'We have doctors, nurses, teachers, judges and TV personalities among our clients,' Grieve reveals. 'If you tried to sell them cannabis on a street corner, they'd be horrified. But many of them have stressful jobs, and these drugs make them feel calmer.' He points out that busy, well-to-do people often don't have the time to see their GP, but can afford to buy over-the-counter medicines in bulk. They're also likely to find it difficult to ask for help when they realise they're hooked.

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