

By Maggie Baumann

What Happens When Pain Pills Cause

Pain?

New treatment program opens at South Coast for medication dependency and chronic pain

Arthritis, headaches, sports injuries and back pain are among the most common chronic pain conditions affecting Americans today. Studies indicate that more than 50 million people in the United States experience chronic pain. It's not uncommon for a physician to prescribe pain medications to treat chronic pain.

Although most patients use their prescription medications as directed by their physicians, about 10 percent of users abuse the prescription drug. Many, in fact, can become addicted to the prescribed medication. Prescription drug abuse is a major health problem in our society. You may recall several years ago when radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh admitted he was dependent on prescription painkillers and sought treatment for his chemical dependency.

Whenever medications are used in ways other than prescribed, the risk of prescription drug abuse and dependency exists. Some patients who abuse the drugs go from doctor's office to doctor's office trying to obtain prescriptions from more than one physician. "The three major classes of prescription drugs most commonly abused include opioids, depressants and stimulants," says addiction medicine specialist Daniel Headrick, M.D., medical director of South Coast Medical Center's Pacific Coast Recovery Medical

Center, a new chemical dependency and chronic pain treatment center.

Commonly Abused Prescription Medications

Opioids are often prescribed to treat chronic pain and include drugs such as OxyContin, codeine, Vicodin and Darvon. Central nervous system depressants are frequently prescribed to treat anxiety and sleep disorders. Common depressants include barbiturates such as Nembutal and benzodiazepines such as Valium and Xanax. Other commonly abused prescription medications are stimulants. These drugs (which increase alertness, attention and energy) help treat conditions such as narcolepsy, ADHD and obesity. Popular stimulants today include Dexedrine and Ritalin.

According to Dr. Headrick, long-term use of opioids or depressants can lead to abuse and physical dependency. Stimulants, when taken in high doses, can lead to compulsive use, paranoia and irregular heartbeat. An overdose of any of these medications can cause serious medical complications, including death.

Professional help, such as a formalized chemical dependency treatment program like South Coast Medical Center's, is often indicated to help individuals safely overcome their medication dependency. ❖



We're Here for You 24/7

Being chemically dependent is not immoral or evidence of a weak individual, as many people believe. It is an illness that can be successfully treated. If you are concerned you or someone you love may have a drug or alcohol dependency, call South Coast Medical Center today for information on treatment at **866-633-6787**.

South Coast Medical Center (SCMC) in Laguna Beach and Pain Recovery Medical Group, Inc. (PRMG) have recently joined forces to establish at the hospital a center of excellence in the treatment of chemical dependency and chronic pain. SCMC has been offering treatment for drug and alcohol dependency since the 1970s, when they opened Genesis, a long-standing chemical dependency recovery program in our community. The hospital's services for chemical dependency treatment recently expanded and now include a specialized treatment track for those patients with chronic pain and medication dependency. This new treatment program is called Pacific Coast Recovery Medical Center.

The problem of pain medication dependency among chronic pain patients is a growing national concern. Most drug treatment centers are not equipped to effectively deal with chronic pain issues, and pain clinics tend to have little knowledge about chemical dependency recovery. "South Coast Medical Center is here to fill this gap in services," says Bruce Christian, President and CEO of South Coast Medical Center. "The principals of PRMG, addiction specialists Daniel Headrick, M.D., and Steven Collier, R.N., have established a track record of success in the development and management of hospital-based treatment programs and have unique experience in this specialty population."

Getting the HELP You Need

- Pacific Coast Recovery
- Medical Center offers
- treatment for medication
- dependency and chronic pain

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The chronic pain and medication dependency program is located on the fourth floor of the hospital, overlooking the magnificent Pacific Ocean and serene coastal environment. The fourth floor also is the location for the hospital's chemical dependency services treating drug and alcohol abuse. The levels of care are comprehensive from inpatient and partial hospitalization to intensive outpatient care.

A multidisciplinary team of addiction medicine specialists provides patient care in a compassionate, safe and confidential setting. Dr. Headrick, who has more than 20 years of experience in treating chemical dependency, is the medical director of the Pacific Coast Recovery Medical Center. Dr. Headrick works alongside an experienced staff of chemical dependency specialists, including physicians, nurses, certified drug/alcohol counselors, psychologists, acupuncturist, a holistic health nurse, a massage therapist and recreational therapists.

Program Features

"Our program is distinctive from other treatment programs because it is hospital based," Dr. Headrick says. "Most chemically dependent treatment centers have moved outside the hospital setting and into the residential setting. This has left a void for services for those people who are more medically compromised

and may require the intensive nursing and hospital-level services."

The 12-Step, spiritually based program is comprehensive and includes:

- Medically supervised detoxification
- 30-day intensive rehab with 60- to 90-day aftercare program
- Group therapy
- Individual therapy
- Family therapy
- Pain management education
- Patient education on the biology of chemical dependency
- Nutrition education
- Men's groups
- Women's groups
- Physical therapy
- Therapeutic outings to destinations around Laguna Beach

Alternative treatments for pain management are an integral part of the program, as well. These alternative services include:

- Acupuncture and acupressure
- Relaxation exercises such as yoga and meditation
- Holistic therapies
- Amino acid replacement
- Bio-electrical medicine

Dr. Headrick adds, "The coastal location of South Coast Medical Center offers our patients views of the ocean that provide a spiritually relaxing and reassuring place of healing." ❖



Addiction medicine physician Daniel Headrick, M.D., is medical director of the Pacific Coast Recovery Medical Center at SCMC, a new treatment program for chemical dependency and chronic pain. Dr. Headrick, who is certified by the American Society of Addiction Medicine, has more than 20 years of experience in treating chemical addiction.

WARNING SIGNS

Are You Abusing Prescription Drugs?

1. Do you feel the need to reduce your use of prescription drugs?

2. Do you feel guilty or regretful about your use of prescription drugs?

3. Have friends or family members confronted you about your use of prescription drugs and you've become annoyed?

4. Do you use prescription drugs to help you function or to calm down?

If you answered yes to one or more of these questions, you may have a medication dependency problem. For treatment information on chronic pain and medication dependency, call South Coast Medical Center at **866-633-6787**. Someone is available to answer your call 24 hours a day!