

HISTORY OF HEROIN IN CAMBRIA COUNTY

Over the past 20 years HEROIN has increased to the point of an epidemic.

In the 1990's HEROIN was on the streets of Cambria County, it was linked to small areas and small groups of known drug addicts. The small groups were located in areas of Johnstown. It seemed that law enforcement knew who these people were, and had a control on the HEROIN trade.

In the mid to late 1990's things changed forever. Oxycontin hit the streets of Cambria County. All types of doctors, such as family doctors, dentists, etc, were prescribing Oxycontin. They were prescribing Oxycontin for every major or minor issue. Oxycontin was given out to young adults for sports related injuries. When someone had a tooth pulled they were prescribed Oxycontin. We received reports that doctors were prescribing Oxycontin for back pain and headaches.

Doctors prescribing this drug took the drug trade from the normal well known areas, such as City of Johnstown, and moved it to every town, boro and municipality throughout Cambria County.

Before law enforcement caught on it was too late, Oxycontin was everywhere. Violent crimes increased throughout the entire county, with a rise in, robberies, assaults, thefts, etc.

As everyone knows now, Oxycontin was created for chronic pain, and used for cancer patients. Not for a backache or a toothache.

During this time period, according to NDIC and other law enforcement from several other states, which include Georgia, New York, Florida, New Jersey, Tennessee, West Virginia, Ohio, Cambria County was a source city of Oxycontin. A Federal Task Force was created consisting of federal, state and local law enforcement to battle the Oxycontin problem. According to the NDIC at that time, this was the first Task Force ever created to fight the Oxycontin problem in the United States. This Task Force over several months arrested over 150 drug dealers that were selling Oxycontin throughout Cambria County.

During this investigation information was obtained and gathered that individuals were in fact coming to the Cambria County area from Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, New York, New Jersey and Ohio and buying Oxycontin and taking the pills back to those cities for distribution. Also during this investigation a doctor was identified as prescribing large amounts of Oxycontin to individuals. He was identified as Doctor ACOSTA.

The Cambria County Drug Task Force received phone calls from other law enforcement agencies in other states asking about Oxycontin. These agencies wanted educated about Oxycontin and the problems associated with it. It seems that here in Cambria County we were hit first and became educated in Oxycontin and we provided advice and information on this new drug to outside agencies.

Dr. ACOSTA was indicted by the federal government and left the country. Dr ACOSTA was picked up on the warrant and transported back to the United States and in fact is being held in the Cambria County Prison awaiting trial on federal charges of Tax Evasion and Health Care Fraud. But what he left behind was death and destruction. Law enforcement did not know how big the Oxycontin problem was. Oxycontin was in every neighborhood on every street in Cambria County. By removing one of the main

sources of Oxycontin (ACOSTA) we created a bigger problem. There were so many people addicted to Oxycontin, they had to feed their habit so they turned to HEROIN.

In the mid 2000's HEROIN exploded overnight. Overdose deaths reached an all time high. Violent crimes went to a new level. The illegal drug trade moved throughout Cambria County.

During this process we lost an entire generation of young adults to this addiction and epidemic. Law enforcement joined hands with the medical field and with educators and attempted to educate young people about issues of using HEROIN and Prescription Pain Medication.

Law enforcement feels that we have made an impact in education and prevention, but we still have that lost generation still using and dying.

During the mid to late 2000's we saw ups and downs in the HEROIN trade. We feel that the reason for this trend is other doctors providing large quantities of prescription pills to individuals in Cambria County. When there is a doctor putting pills on the street the HEROIN trade goes down, as soon as this doctor stops writing the scripts, then less pills on the street means more HEROIN on the street. Prescription Pain Pills and HEROIN supply go hand in hand and will be forever linked together.

WHERE DOES THE HEROIN COME FROM

Over the years we have attempted to track the HEROIN coming to Cambria County.

Back in the mid to late 1990's the majority of Heroin was coming from Pittsburgh. This HEROIN was packaged in very tiny balloons. Known individuals would drive to the Pittsburgh area and transport the HEROIN back to Cambria County.

In the late 1990's to early 2000's a person identified as Ryan DIAMOND opened up a gateway to HEROIN that we are still fighting. DIAMOND went to the Philadelphia area and brought back stamp bags. DIAMOND would take other people from the Johnstown area to Philadelphia and show them where to go and get the HEROIN. Then more and more people were driving to the Philly area and bringing HEROIN back.

We interviewed 100's of people that we have arrested and in fact we interviewed Ryan DIAMOND and the information provided states that DIAMOND opened up the pipeline of stamp bags from Philadelphia to Cambria County.

DIAMOND was born and raised in Cambria County and is from the Adams Township area.

Addicts preferred the stamp bags due to the level of purity (better HEROIN better high) and also the price. You would be getting more HEROIN for your money.

What occurred next was that drug dealers would come back with DIAMOND and others and set up shop and sell HEROIN.

TODAY'S TREND

Over the past few years law enforcement has been investigating another local doctor that was prescribing large quantities of prescription pills to individuals in the Cambria County area. Patients were coming from outside the county, even hours away, to this doctor for prescribed medications. This doctor has recently stopped writing scripts. Numerous complaints from local pharmacies were called in questioning the doctor's prescribing practices. The doctor is currently the subject of a criminal investigation and has been indicted by the Federal Government.

What has occurred is a repeat of the past several years; HEROIN has shown a very large increase throughout the Cambria County area. No pills being prescribed equates to more HEROIN.

INFORMATION AS FOLLOWS:

2012 First Quarter 33% of controlled buys were
HEROIN

2012 Second Quarter 35% of controlled buys were
HEROIN

2012 Third Quarter 33% of controlled buys were
HEROIN

2012 Forth Quarter 40% of controlled buys were
HEROIN

2013 First Quarter 46% of controlled buys were
HEROIN

2013 Second Quarter 68% of controlled buys were
HEROIN

2013 Third Quarter 59% of controlled buys were
HEROIN

2013 Fourth Quarter 60% of controlled buys were
HEROIN

2014 first Quarter 62% of controlled buys were
HEROIN

Over the past several months the Cambria County Drug Task Force along with Federal, State and Local agencies investigated a large HEROIN operation that was supplying/distributing 80 percent of all HEROIN in the Cambria County area. This ring was also supplying large amounts of HEROIN in Somerset, Indiana, Bedford and Blair counties.

During the course of this investigation a person identified as James HENDRICKS was responsible for transporting large quantities of HEROIN from the New York, New Jersey area back to Cambria County for distribution. Two other people were also identified as being apart of this organization. They are Logan HARRIS and Dian LASSITER.

Task Force Detectives obtained arrest warrants and also a search warrant for the apartment where the three resided. During the execution of the search warrant, HEROIN with a street value of over \$250,000.00 was seized and a HEROIN processing center was discovered inside their apartment. Over 30 thousand new stamp bags were seized, along with two stolen handguns. This was the largest HEROIN seizure in Cambria County Task Force history.

We have already identified the new person that is attempting to take over the HEROIN market that HENDRICKS controlled.

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