

Press Release
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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Where Are the Opioids Coming From?

The opioid epidemic has become a concern for national security. The nation is dealing with one of the worst drug crises in history. Research analysts believe the problem started with the over prescription of legal pain medications, such as oxycodone, but note that it has intensified in recent years with an influx of cheap heroin and synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl, supplied by foreign-based drug cartels. According a recent article in The Council on Foreign Relations, heroin shipments that are entering the United States cities emanate from the poppy farms in Mexico. Mexican cartels typically smuggle large quantities of drugs across the United States southwest border in passenger vehicles or tractor trailers. Heroin is also produced in South American countries and trafficked to the United States by air and sea.

The United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) maintains Mexican cartels are the greatest criminal drug threat to the United States. Efforts have been made by the United States Government to cut both foreign and domestic supply of opioids. Federal and state officials are attempting to reduce the demand by focusing on prevention and treatment in lieu of incarceration for addicts. The DEA reduced the production in pharmaceutical manufactures by at least 25 percent of drugs that are considered high risk misuse. Additional cuts are planned to be made by President Trump to reduce the number of filled prescriptions by one-third in three years. Other countries such as Australia and Canada where the opioid epidemic has spiked as well, are experimenting with different policies.

For decades Heroin has been the most commonly used illegal opioid. Opioids are a class of drugs derived from the opium poppy plant that can be divided into two broad categories: legally manufactured medications and illicit narcotics. Opioid medications, including oxycodone, hydrocodone, and morphine, are commonly prescribed to treat pain, while methadone is primarily used in addiction treatment centers to reduce patients' dependence on opioids. Opioids gained popularity among doctors in the 1990s for treating patients who had undergone surgery or cancer treatment, but in the last fifteen years physicians increasingly prescribed them for chronic conditions, such as back or joint pain, despite concerns about their safety and effectiveness. Opioid-related deaths have grown in lockstep with the volume of opioids prescribed. A spike in the use of illegal opioids in the United States followed the rise in prescriptions, as many users turn to heroin and other illegal drugs once they can no longer obtain enough of their prescribed drug to keep pace with what may be a developing addiction.

The Council on Foreign Relations is a United States nonprofit think tank specializing in U.S. foreign policy and international affairs. To read the article please visit <https://www.cfr.org/backgroundunder/us-opioid-epidemic>.

The United States Drug Enforcement Administration is a United States federal law enforcement agency under the United States Department of Justice, tasked with combating drug smuggling and distribution within the United States. For more information please visit www.dea.gov.

The SAFE Glen Cove Coalition is joining in the fight against this epidemic by conducting an opioid prevention awareness campaign entitled, "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE," in order to educate and update the community regarding opioid use and its consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the Opioid Epidemic at www.safeglencove.org.