

ALCOHOL AND DRUG DEPENDENCE – BARBITURATES

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(This is based on belief in God. If that offends you, stop reading now)

In this presentation, we will look at succumbing to the siren song of barbiturates.

True story. I met a man once who owned a thoroughbred race horse he had insured for six million dollars. It was fed very well, given the best veterinary care and housed in a very nice stall in a very nice stable. His stall had a glass wall at the back that it shared with its owner's office. That way, the man could watch his horse throughout the day for any change in health or behavior. Given the amount of money he charged for breeding it, he wanted to make sure the horse was in the best condition to perform as well as possible in every race. (To be continued)

General Description of Drugs in this Class:

Barbiturates are central nervous system depressants, acting in a similar fashion as alcohol. They slow down many areas of the brain. These drugs are known as sedative/hypnotics, as they can be used as sedatives to calm people and at higher doses, as hypnotics to assist sleep. Unlike other abused drugs, barbiturates are rarely produced in clandestine laboratories. Usually, legitimate pharmaceutical products are obtained with forged prescriptions etc., though some are also illegally imported from foreign manufacturers.

Common Street Names: Methaqualone is known as Quaaludes, ludes, supers, and 14s. Other barbiturates are nicknamed "barbs" or "downers" or called names based on the color of the capsule, like "reds" or "yellows.. Other names include blue devils, red devils and yellow jackets. Commonly abused barbiturates include amobarbital (Amytal), pentobarbital (Nembutal) and secobarbital (Seconal). Abused tranquilizers are Valium, Librium, Equanil, Miltown, Serax and Traxene. They come in capsules and tablets or sometimes as liquid or suppositories.

How Barbiturates Affects Users:

Barbiturates work by enhancing a neurotransmitter (a chemical messenger) in charge of inhibiting or slowing down parts of the brain. When we sleep, some areas of the brain are inhibited, since they are not needed. Barbiturates increase the activity of those inhibitors controlling aspects of the body like mood, locomotion, co-ordination and even breathing. Effects can last up to six hours.

Legitimate Medical Uses:

Through the early 1900's, barbiturates were widely used for anxiety and insomnia and in conjunction with amphetamines, to treat depression. Concern about their addictive potential and associated fatalities, led to the development of alternatives. Once benzodiazepines were available, the medicinal use of barbiturates was greatly reduced. Phenobarbital is still used as an anti-convulsant for epilepsy and other barbiturates are occasionally used to treat depression.

Reasons Behind Barbiturate Use:

The primary reason given for barbiturate use is to deal with stress and help relax. Sometimes so relaxed, we just stop breathing. They seem like a predictable and effective way to change how we feel, make us more calm and less uptight and inhibited. Some use them to better enjoy social events by not starting the evening off uptight.

Consequences for Abuse of Barbiturates

Physical Health

Barbiturate sleeping pills are intoxicating. If capsules are opened, dissolved in water and then injected, it can cause a burning sensation in the arm. Small amounts produce calmness and relax muscles, combining sedation and anxiety reduction. Combining them with other drugs that slow down the body, multiplies effects and greatly increases the risk of death. Death easily occurs when barbiturates and alcohol are combined, accidentally or deliberately in suicide.

Mental Health

Moderate doses cause drowsiness, confusion, inability to concentrate, loss of coordination, tremors and slurred speech. Driving a car or operating machinery becomes deadly, as judgment is seriously impaired. Methaqualone creates feelings of helplessness in the mind. Since they produce depression, thoughts of suicide are prevalent with barbiturate use.

Probability of Addiction / Dependence

Depending on dose, frequency and duration of use, tolerance and/or physical and psychological dependence on barbiturates develops quickly. Methaqualone builds tolerance quickly, requiring increasing amounts. As increasing amounts are used, the margin of safety between an effective and a lethal dose becomes very narrow. To get the same high, users raise doses to levels that can produce comas or death.

Dependence on barbiturates occurs in a very short time and long-term users require hospitalization to safely undergo very painful withdrawal effects from such drugs. Barbiturate withdrawal can be more serious than heroin withdrawal and sometimes deadly.

Social or Societal Consequences

Users quickly learn to fear the agony of withdrawal symptoms. Their world becomes centered on obtaining barbiturates so they won't hurt again. Users will eventually alienate everyone around them by stealing from any available victims, especially family, until they receive help. Even if the addiction cycle is broken, few will be willing to extend trust again.

Legal Consequences

Barbiturates are Class B drugs under the Misuse of Drugs Act. It is illegal to produce, supply or possess them.

The Trap Associated With Barbiturate Use

Over time, we can become so dependent on these drugs, we lose our ability to do what we're designed to do naturally. We can't relax, get to sleep or cope with stress without them. After addiction sets in, it just multiplies the stress and adds to the need for the same drug. All that assumes we stay below lethal overdose levels, compensating for increased tolerance levels.

The Rest of the Story:



Not a true story. The race horse mentioned earlier seemed especially agitated the day before the most important race of his life. Realizing how much the contest meant to the horse, the owner had it drugged with powerful sedatives the morning of the big event. Just to help it calm down and deal with all the stress.

Yeah, right.

A Practical Application:

We seem to have a lot of stress in our lives, juggling demands of home, maybe school, a relationship, social circles, a job and bills. There's little time to relax and it's hard to unwind when we do get a chance. Sometimes taking a vacation just means coming back to more chaos. So we lay down to sleep and our minds won't stop. The more we are aware of time passing without needed sleep, the more stressed we get and the harder to relax. So we turn to tranquilizers and sleeping pills in desperation, despite the danger.

A Historical Application:

There aren't many people, who after watching friends or loved ones die or have their lives spiral out of control from barbiturate use, who don't understand their danger.

In the Bible, we read that Amnon, a stressed-out son of King David, was also sleeping poorly. He had a half sister named Tamar with whom he thought he was in love and wanted her so badly, he felt sick from frustration. When Amnon explained the problem to a friend, a plan was concocted. "Tell your Dad you're sick. Ask him to send Tamar to your room to fix you lunch and feed it to you. Then do whatever you want to her." This might be a good time to mention that Amnon was well aware of the danger in raping anyone.

Amnon put the plan in motion, regardless of consequences. King David instructed Tamar to take care of Amnon since he was sick. When Tamar brought him food, he ordered all the servants out of the room. He then asked her to join him in bed, but she refused. Amnon was so intent on getting his way, he raped her. As soon as Amnon came to his senses, he was disgusted with himself, ordering her to leave. He now hated her as much as he had once thought he loved her. With his guilt inside, he just knew he didn't want her around. The very thing he thought he needed, no matter what, was now something he wanted out of his life.

Amnon knew what he had done, carried a death sentence under Jewish Law. No doubt, he thought he was different and consequences wouldn't touch him. After all, he was the king's son. He was not as powerless as others who became victims of their longings. It was common people who paid with their lives, for yielding to their desires.

Since David couldn't do the job, another king's son killed him. Absalom had Amnon assassinated to avenge his sister's honor, then fled into exile. Then he too was killed by Joab. Two homes were shattered and broken because of one man's weakness and self-centeredness.

Homes are still being broken by yielding to selfish desires. How many times have we wanted sleep, relaxation or relief from stress and obtained it in a dangerous fashion, despite knowing the risks. Afterwards, it becomes everything we did not want. The price tag of using drugs to cope is never worth what they take from us. Few remain in love with them, once they have obtained their initial desire.

Trying Out a Better Way:

Drugging yourself before undertaking important tasks is no more appropriate for people than racehorses. A quick search of the Internet, or consulting with any competent doctor, will

yield simple suggestions for improving sleep or reducing stress, without barbiturate use. Instructions do generally need to be followed to be effective, and some require a bit more effort than placing pills inside our mouths and swallowing them.

As yet a third option, the scriptures describe the Spirit of God as the peace that passes all understanding. Allowing that Spirit to reside inside us, makes for a pretty peaceful life, with no resulting dangerous withdrawal symptoms.



Joab Killing Absalom - Unknown

