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Opiates

Opiates are a class of drugs that that are known to take away pain. Opiates can also cause a euphoric state or a high. Types of opiates include heroin, methadone, opium, morphine, codeine, and almost all prescription pain pills with the oxy and perc prefixes. Abuse of prescription pain medication is a growing trend in the United States and commonly abused pain medications today include forms of hydrocodone such as Vicodin, Lortab, and Lorcet. Also in the mainstream is the oxycodone family which includes OxyContin, Percocet, Percodan, and Tylox.

Regular use of opiates leads to a tolerance over time and the body eventually requires more of the drug to produce the same effect or high. When the body's demand for additional opiates increases, dependence sets in. When drug use becomes compulsive or unmanageable and use is continued regardless of serious negative consequences, addictive behavior has formed. At La Hacienda Treatment Center, we treat the whole person with the understanding that successfully completing detoxification and discontinuing opiate use is not enough to change addictive behavior patterns. Intensive therapy and follow-up is needed.

Opiates and Bipolar Disorder

The mood-altering effects of opiates may be enhanced or exaggerated in bipolar individuals. A case-study documenting the impact of opiates on individuals with bipolar disorder was reported in *The Journal of Neuropsychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences* (2007).

The report concludes:

“The results of this study indicate that opioid analgesics, especially hydrocodone, can precipitate a hypomanic/manic reaction in a significant percentage of patients with bipolar disorder and have an antidepressant effect in others. The occurrence of a hypomanic/manic episode in patients receiving opioid analgesics may be a clue to an underlying bipolar disorder in patients who have not been previously so diagnosed. Moreover, patients with a known bipolar disorder should be alerted to the risk of an exacerbation of hypomanic/manic symptoms when they take opioids.”

Nonetheless, opiates are not proven to induce mania in all bipolar patients. In fact, some individuals with bipolar disorder experience no side effects when taking opiates as prescribed and in a responsible manner. However, extreme behavior seen in individuals with bipolar disorder combined with substance abuse of any type often leads to dire consequences. Mood altering drugs have the ability to induce manic episodes that cause unpredictable behavior.

The attraction to opiates in bipolar individuals may stem from the need for a high to chemically counterbalance a bipolar person's natural lows. A bipolar individual may feel an antidepressant effect from the use of opiates.

The same study recommends,

“Bipolar patients taking maintenance opioids for chronic pain should be periodically assessed to determine whether they are misusing the opioid to self-medicate their depressive symptoms.”

Opiate Withdrawal

Withdrawal symptoms from the use of opiates taken over a prolonged period can range from the feeling of having the “flu” to more severe symptoms that can cause permanent damage to the heart, lungs, and brain. Signs of withdrawal such as sleep difficulty, muscle aches, severe cramping, runny nose, cough, and diarrhea will appear. Mood swings, depression, or instability may occur for weeks. Death may ensue from opiate withdrawal. Opiate dependency treatment requires monitoring in a safe and responsible medical environment.

visited on 3/27/2015

Opiate withdrawal can be a painful and dangerous process without professional care. We are here to help. Contact La Hacienda Treatment Center for more information on opiate detox and recovery.



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