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VICTIMS' ADVOCATE

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Methadone vs. Heroin: Effects are the same

By DeAngelo K. Brown
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Imagine that it's 6 a.m., the sun has yet to rise, and hundreds of customers are lined up around a building awaiting the doors to open so they can buy one of the most potent and addictive narcotics being used in our society. And then imagine that it's legal.

This is a common environment outside some methadone treatment centers.

Substance abuse remains a constant ailment that plagues our society. Illegal drugs are being bought and sold at the same rate and availability as any other high-demand product of commerce. Although there are many theories and strategies for the solution of this age-old problem, substituting a very dangerous narcotic for a synthetic, also dangerous, narcotic may not, as previously believed, be the safest solution.

The dangerous narcotic: heroin. The substitute: methadone.

Methadone is a synthetic opiate used to treat heroin abuse. It reduces the cravings and withdrawal symptoms caused by opiate use by blocking the "high" and preventing the intense euphoric rush associated with heroin. The process of a heroin user becoming a methadone user is called opiate detoxification. A user is initially administered methadone, and then the doses are decreased over a period of two to three weeks. Although the "high" of heroin is blocked by methadone, because it is a synthetic opiate and every patient's tolerance is not the same, it can cause similar side effects that are usually associated with heroin.

When addicted to heroin, users many times are unable to function socially or lead productive, normal lives. They withdraw from their family and friends and become involved in crimes to gain resources to fund their addiction. A heroin addict, on average, will spend about \$10 a dose or between \$100 to \$200 a day to maintain that high for at least 24 hours. Methadone users, however, will spend about \$13 per day and that dosage can last between 15 and 20 hours.

Methadone is safer, cheaper and environmentally different from heroin, correct? Not exactly. Heroin users line up to

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"I'm afraid to stop at red lights..."

Robbery victims remain fearful

By Sherrie Clark



It's the Christmas season, a time of merriment, cheer and giving. Sometimes it's hard to remember there are predators among us, lurking in the shadows, waiting for an opportunity to steal our possessions - and our sense of security.

Cindy Smith and Mary Brown* discovered this fact all too well on December 4, 2008. The two friends had left a restaurant sometime after 10 p.m., and neither was ready to go home. Arriving at Cindy's car, Mary got in the passenger seat while Cindy climbed in the driver's seat and began to work on her laptop.

Soon, both women heard banging on their respective car door windows with the chilling sound of metal hitting glass. When the women looked to see who or what demanded their attention, each saw a man wearing a black hoodie shirt and gloves. The metallic objects hitting their windows were handguns.

Cindy said, "I was so scared. I just knew the window was going to shatter. The first thing that went through my mind was that I needed to give him everything he

wants, whatever he asks for, just give it to him."

The next thing Mary knew, her car door had been opened. The man pointed a gun at her and demanded her purse. She complied, giving everything she had with her - keys, wallet, cell phone and other belongings - to this stranger. He then ran toward the back of the car and disappeared into the night.

In the meantime, the other man had swung open Cindy's door and ordered, "Give me all your stuff; give me all your stuff." The gun he had used to bang on her window was now pointed directly at her. He grabbed her laptop, and a fearful Cindy gave him her cell phone and wallet. But this wasn't enough; he wanted her purse. She denied having one, but he refused to believe her. Each time he demanded her purse, he got angrier and louder, then he hit her in the face with the hard, cold metal.

"I was surprised when I felt the gun on my face," Cindy recalls. "The pain was extreme, not only in the spot where he hit me, but my whole face felt the pain. I just stayed quiet. I knew at that point that whatever I said to him wouldn't make a difference either way."

Mary intervened the best she could by yelling at him

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Don't become a victim

JSO offers suggestions to be safe during the holidays:

Away from Home

- When parking: roll up the windows, lock the vehicle, take your keys with you. Don't leave garage door openers or house keys in your car.

- Don't leave children or pets unattended in a car.

- If you must keep anything in your car that identifies where you live, such as insurance cards or registration, make sure to lock the glove box or compartment where you store them, in addition to locking your car doors. Thieves want to get in and get out quickly, so using secure compartments in the car for personal items might harden the target.

- If shopping after daylight hours, park and walk in lighted areas. Shop with a friend if possible, and not alone. REMEMBER where you park!

- WOMEN: If someone grabs you, scream "FIRE" - this will get people's attention and assistance more easily than "HELP."

- Don't look vulnerable or distracted; don't leave the store "loaded up" with packages; don't fumble for your keys while walking; don't talk on the phone or text while moving through a parking lot or in and out of stores; remove earphones. Keep purses, handbags, backpacks close to your body. Be purposeful in your actions.

- It is recommended that electronics purchases (or

jewelry and other expensive items) be made last, if you are out shopping at multiple stores, so you do not have to store them in the car during other stops.

- If you must leave valuable items in your car, place them out of sight before reaching your destination or move them inconspicuously.

- ~ Load your trunk when you leave a location.

- ~ Never open a trunk, fill it full of valuables, close it, and then just walk away to do more shopping or other errands.

- ~ This includes packages, backpacks, gym bags, GPS units, MP3 players, CDs.

- ~ An opportunistic thief is on the lookout for "trunk-packing" and can break into your car the minute you're out of sight.

- ~ Also, someone may be watching when you put items under/behind seats and try to cover them up.

- Thieves check glove compartments, behind seats, and under seats. It only takes a few seconds to check all the "usual" hiding places in the car where people leave things.

- NEVER think "I'll just be a minute" and leave a car unlocked, or worse, leave the engine running. It takes just a few seconds to break into or steal a car.

While out and about, present an alert appearance.

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