



Prescription for pain a gateway to heroin

Published: Aug. 21, 2010 at 12:49 AM

BUFFALO, N.Y., Aug. 21 (UPI) -- About one-third of patients hospitalized for opioid detoxification say they first got hooked on drugs prescribed for pain, U.S. researchers found.

Senior author Dr. Richard Blondell, a professor of family medicine at the University at Buffalo, says of the 75 patients involved in the study, 24 began with a friend's leftover prescription pills or with pills pilfered from a medicine cabinet, while 20 patients said they got hooked on street drugs.

The study, published in the *Journal of Addiction Medicine*, found 92 percent of the patients studied said they eventually bought drugs off the street -- primarily heroin -- because it is less expensive and more effective than prescription drugs using drugs.

The patients say they continued to use the drugs because it:

- Helped take away my emotional pain and stress.
- Helped them feel normal.
- Helped them feel like a better person.

"We are seeing an increase in the number of patients addicted to prescriptions drugs so we wanted to better understand how they first got hooked," Blondell says in a statement. "This information suggests that there is a progressive nature to opioid use, and that prescription opioids can be the gateway to illicit drug addiction."

© 2010 United Press International, Inc. All Rights Reserved.