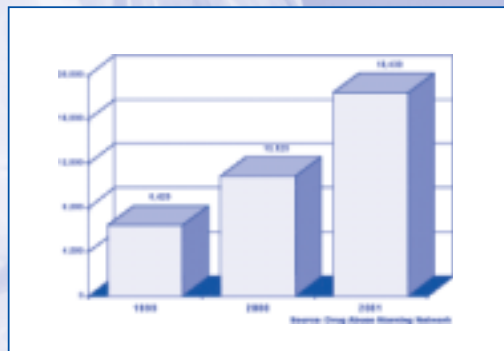


• **Many people consider prescription drugs to be “safe,”** and will even stockpile drugs prescribed to them for post-surgical use for the future, “just in case.” Consider a story about a person who shares a drug prescribed to them years ago, only to enable an addiction in a loved one, or cause an accidental death by ignoring the potential of fatal drug interactions. Ask a *First Draft* expert for specific drug interactions.

• **Remember that prescription drugs aren’t all bad.** For the most effective, in-depth portrayals, and to properly inform your audiences, show how effective painkillers can be when used as directed by a physician and manufacturer—but don’t ignore the reality that many prescription painkillers, because they are so pleasurable, are also highly addictive.



## More than Oxycontin®

OxyContin® has been getting a lot of attention, but it’s not the only overused painkiller out there. Below is a list of some other opioid-based pain relievers that have a high likelihood of abuse.

| Drug Name . . | Also Known As . .  | Taken By . .                |
|---------------|--|-----------------------------|
| Codeine       | Empirin with Codeine, Fiorinal with Codeine, Robitussin A-C, Tylenol with Codeine; Captain Cody, Cody, schoolboy, (with glutethimide) doors & fours, loads, pancakes and syrup | Injected or swallowed       |
| Fentanyl      | Actiq, Dexedrine, Sublimaze; Apache, China girl, China white, dance fever, friend, goodfella, jackpot, murder 8, TNT, Tango and Cash   | Injected, smoked, snorted   |
| Heroin        | Diacetylmorphine; brown sugar, dope, H, horse, junk, skag, skunk, smack, white horse   | Injected, smoked, snorted   |
| Morphine      | Roxanol, Duramorph; M, Miss Emma, monkey, white stuff  | Injected, swallowed, smoked |
| Opium         | Laudanum, paregoric; big O, black stuff, block, gum, hop   | Swallowed, smoked           |



## Enhanced Creative Vision

First Draft provides members of the entertainment industry’s creative community—screenwriters, directors, development executives, science-based health information services for comedy, drama, talk-shows, reality-based programming, movies made for television, feature films, and music videos.

For free consultation on scripts and projects, please call toll free

866-289-4347

Free briefings with scientific experts for your staff are also available. To schedule a briefing or order a free copy of *Spotlight on Depiction*, a resource encyclopedia for the creative community, call 866-289-4347.

*NYPD Blue’s* “I Kid You Not” episode shows a young mother’s arrest for unlawful possession of methadone.

*Dr. Phil* did a *PRISM*-nominated episode showing the step-by-step intervention of a 21-year-old addict by his parents. At first, his mother didn’t think the young man had a problem; she soon realized the problems inherent in her son’s addiction to alcohol, stimulants, opiates, marijuana and prescription drugs.

*The John Walsh Show* illustrated the diversity of addiction by showing a teenaged boy and a housewife who were both addicted to OxyContin®. The woman’s stepson died from OxyContin® after his first use of the drug.

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Beverly Hillbilly Heroin:  
Oxy on TV

Killing More than Pain

Oxycontin®: “Hillbilly Heroin”

What is OxyContin®?

What does OxyContin® look like?

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Spotlight on Depiction

Emergency Department Drug Mentions - OxyCodone

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# Spotlight on ... Pain Killers

A NEWSBRIEF OF THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRIES COUNCIL, INC. No. 18

## Killing More than Pain



Anyone who has ever had any kind of surgery knows that painkillers are important to recovery. For some people who are stricken with chronic pain, painkilling drugs can also extend their lives and vastly improve health crises related to pain. But painkillers can also be people killers—or at least they can be highly addictive and wreak havoc with people’s lives.

It is important to note both properties of painkilling drugs. Many painkillers are opiates or opium derivatives, and

can produce highly pleasurable side effects in certain people. This property can make some drugs addictive, and once people become dependent on them, they can ruin lives.

## Beverly Hillbilly Heroin: Oxy on TV



**It’s a Family Affair:** OxyContin abuse was featured on this season’s hit reality show *The Osbournes*, and also showed up on *Osbourne Mom* Sharon’s syndicated talk show.

Painkillers like OxyContin® aren’t just being abused in the backwoods; they are all over the small screen. The *PRISM Awards*, which honor television, film and music productions that accurately depict substance abuse and addiction, received many submissions in 2004 dealing with the abuse of OxyContin® or other prescription painkillers. Among these submissions are some outstanding *PRISM Awards* Nominees:

*MTV News Now* shows Ozzy Osbourne’s son Jack dealing with his addiction to OxyContin. Jack spent

56 days in rehab after overdosing four times before he even thought of stopping,

*The Sharon Osbourne Show*, the eponymous host interviewed her son, Jack, and his friend about their recovery from addictions to OxyContin®, alcohol and cocaine.

**Be Observant!** Look for these symbols throughout *Spotlight on ... Pain Killers*  
 **Take Action!**  
 Depiction suggestions for entertainment creators

## The Painful Truth About Painkiller Abuse

- Between 2000 and 2002, a survey of 30 New York hospitals showed that “abuse of narcotic pain relievers jumped 79 percent.”<sup>1</sup>
- The L.A. Times reported that “Doctors in L.A. and elsewhere have identified at least 48 cases of deafness tied to prolonged misuse of Vicodin and other comparable prescription medicines.”<sup>2</sup>
- Florida’s Medical Examiner’s Commission reported that between January and June of 2001, 217 deaths were caused by lethal doses of either oxycodone or hydrocodone. During the same period, 183 deaths were caused by cocaine, and 126 were caused by heroin. Florida’s Governor has proposed a state-wide computerized tracking of all prescription drugs to control the problem.<sup>3</sup>
- From 1999 to 2001, the number of people of all age groups who used OxyContin for nonmedical reasons quadrupled (from 221,000 to 957,000).<sup>4</sup>
- Doctors found guilty of participating in the illegal trade of prescription drugs face up to 20 years in federal prison.<sup>5</sup>

## OxyContin®: “Hillbilly Heroin”

### What is OxyContin®?

OxyContin® is the brand name of a time-release formula of the analgesic chemical oxycodone. OxyContin®, which is produced by the pharmaceutical company Purdue Pharma, is prescribed as a pain medication. Instances of abuse of this drug have increased in recent years.

According to Dr. Glen R. Hanson, former acting director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), “OxyContin® is a Schedule II drug, meaning it has a high potential for abuse and is only available by prescription by a licensed physician.”<sup>1</sup> Dr. Hanson said that OxyContin® produces a “euphoric” effect and that “it is this euphoric effect and the fact that many people perceive prescription painkillers as ‘safe’ that are likely the reasons why this drug is being abused in such alarming numbers. In fact, there are some indicators that this drug may be used by some as a substitute for heroin.”

### Street terms for OxyContin®:

Hillbilly heroin, Oxy, Oxycotton<sup>2</sup>

### What does OxyContin® look like?

- OxyContin comes in tablet form.

*continued on page 3*

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### What are the methods of usage?

- Chewing the tablets
- Snorting crushed tablets
- Dissolving tablets in water and injecting
- Often, after crushing the pills, people inject, inhale or take them orally, often with other pills, marijuana or alcohol<sup>3</sup>

These methods cause a faster, highly dangerous release of medication.

### Who uses OxyContin®?

- Abuse of OxyContin® in rural Maine, Kentucky, Virginia, and West Virginia brought national attention to this problem.
- The areas most currently affected by OxyContin® abuse are eastern Kentucky; New Orleans, Louisiana; southern Maine; Philadelphia and southwestern Pennsylvania; southwestern Virginia; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Phoenix, Arizona.<sup>4</sup>
- An increase in illegal use has been especially apparent on the East Coast.<sup>5</sup>
- 9% or 19.9 million Americans have used pain relievers illegally in their lifetime.<sup>6</sup>

### How does OxyContin® get to the United States?

- Because it is a legal drug, OxyContin® is supplied across the country for legitimate medical purposes.
- Word of mouth has allowed users to devise illicit usage techniques.
- Pharmacy robberies, health care fraud, and international trafficking constitute illicit distribution.

### How much does OxyContin® cost?

- When legally sold, a 10-mg tablet of OxyContin® will cost \$1.25 and an 80-mg tablet will cost \$6.
- When illegally sold, a 10-mg tablet of OxyContin® can cost between \$5 and \$10. An 80-mg tablet can cost between \$65 and \$80.<sup>7</sup>

### What are some consequences of illicit OxyContin® use?

- Long-term usage can lead to physical dependence.<sup>8</sup>
- A large dosage can cause severe respiratory depression that can lead to death.<sup>9</sup>
- Withdrawal symptoms include restlessness, muscle and bone pain, insomnia, diarrhea, vomiting, cold flashes with goose bumps, and involuntary leg movements.<sup>10</sup>



**E! True Hollywood Story** is *PRISM*-nominated for an episode featuring Lisa Marie Presley’s dependence on prescription drugs, which she links back to memories of her father’s methadone therapy during her childhood.

## Treatment: Harder Than It Sounds

Long-term use of opiates eventually damages the brain, causing a physical dependence on the drugs to continue normal bodily functions. Additionally, they eventually take priority over all of the user’s motivations, overriding all other desires and needs in the person’s life.

Interestingly, it is opiate derivatives like **methadone** and **buprenorphine** that present the most hope for weaning opiate addicts off of painkillers.

According to **Nora Volkow, M.D., Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)**, “Buprenorphine represents a major step forward in the treatment of opiate addiction. It allows physicians to treat patients for this disease in the same manner that other people are treated for such other chronic illnesses as diabetes or high blood pressure.

“Office-based buprenorphine increases the availability of therapy by offering patients greater flexibility in treatment scheduling and integration with the mainstream public for their health services.”

Dr. Volkow cautions that, while buprenorphine may dramatically improve opiate addiction, it is not foolproof. Addiction is now understood to be a chronic illness and, like cancer, those in treatment who appear to have entered a phase of remission often relapse and need ongoing or continued treatment.



## Spotlight on Depiction



Below are some depiction suggestions provided by EIC to get you thinking about ways in which you can introduce the important issue of prescription painkiller abuse into your storylines. These suggestions are provided to encourage the creative process, not to inhibit it.

- **Older adults** often suffer from diseases and illnesses that cause chronic, unbearable pain, and are the most frequent recipients of treatment for such pain. Consider depicting the complications that may arise from prescribing OxyContin® and other painkillers to those over 60, such as the likelihood of forgetfulness (especially while medicated), drug costs, unintentional misuse of the drugs

and drug interactions. Call 1-866-289-4347 for EIC’s toll-free *First Draft* technical assistance and referral service, or e-mail [firstdraft@eiconline.org](mailto:firstdraft@eiconline.org), to talk with an addiction expert to help with your storylines.

- **Technology** has affected the way that many people get their drugs. Consider a storyline about how some people abuse the Internet to order prescription painkillers without a doctor’s prescription. Your story might focus on either an addict who will go to any lengths—and pay any price—to get the drug that they crave, or it might focus on a dealer, who orders prescription drugs online at the retail price and sells them on the street at an inflated cost to addicts.

*continued on page 5*