

## *It Is Here*

Relatives, friends, citizens of the Lakewood, Ohio community are to be consumed, tranquilized, poisoned, murdered as a result of a national health emergency--the opioid epidemic. This drug, that most are prescribed, is tearing loved ones away, corrupting America, and leaving many questioning, "Why?". We can no longer sit back while allowing the opioid crisis to engulf all, it is here, present--it is within reach.

There is an alarming reality in the modern world of medicine: patients are dying in incalculable numbers from therapies prescribed to treat pain. According to the Centers For Disease Control And Prevention, in the last 16 years, more than 183,000 Americans have died from overdoses related to an opioid prescription; the most common drug involved in prescription opioid overdose deaths include Methadone, Oxycodone (OxyContin), and Hydrocodone (Vicodin). Prescription opioids usually come in pill form and are given to treat severe pain--pain from dental surgery, serious sport injuries, or cancer. Medical professional are doing a poor job in administering the appropriate amount of painkiller--patients are receiving a surfeit of opioids resulting in dependencies and/or addictions. Of many cases, my very own sister received a copious amount of OxyContin following the extraction of her wisdom teeth, which could have led to addiction or worse if not discarded. The opioid epidemic is real--it is all around us--it is within reach.

Ohio, the place we call home, has been one of the states hardest hit by the crisis; last year 86% of overdose deaths in our state involved an opioid. The drug overdose crisis we once watched from a distance, on the news and radio, seemed to strike everyone but *us*, but that is not the case today. The crisis is about *us*. In 2016, there were nearly 700 opioid related deaths reported in Cuyahoga County. The crisis is about *us*. According to the National Council Of Alcoholism and Drug Defense, 44% of Americans say they personally know someone who has been addicted to painkillers, commonly Oxycodone (OxyContin). The crisis has affected me personally and has sadly impacted my family; my uncle's spouse passed away in March of 2015 due to an opioid overdose, my cousin's best friend passed away in September of 2012 due to an opioid overdose, and most recently, my teammate's 21 year-old sister passed away October of 2017 due to, yet another, opioid overdose. Yes, the opioid crisis has affected me personally. The crisis is about *us* and yes, it is within reach.

*It is here, it is within reach, it is about us, and it must come to an end; we must combat the opioid epidemic--we must find treatment for those currently addicted and prevent access and future misuse. Combatting the epidemic must begin with bringing awareness to the topic at hand while educating society of the risks and symptoms of an addict. Providing treatment or alternatives for opioid addicts must be essential; medicines such as methadone, buprenorphine, and naltrexone are used to reduce opioid cravings. Finally, it is necessary to address the other problems that led to the addiction; the misuse of medical professionals over-administering painkillers. We must put an end to such a dire crisis, for the opioid epidemic is not just about us--it is within us.*

We must terminate the opioid epidemic before it terminates *us*.