



‘Make it easier to get’ – How to fix the opioid crisis

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The debate over whether or not safe injection sites should be allowed for opioid addicts in King County is currently underway.

A debate not happening right now, at least not locally, is whether or not opioids should be made illegal in the first place. Obviously, they are permitted for use as long as the user has a prescription. But what if you could walk into any local pharmacy and get your Vicodin or Percocet whenever you wanted it?

On [Rantz and Burns](#), we spoke with Jeffrey Miron, a senior lecturer and director of undergraduate studies in the Department of Economics at Harvard University, as well as director of economics studies at the Cato Institute, who believes legalizing drugs, is the way to curb the overdose epidemic the United States is now facing.

Miron is a Libertarian, so I wasn't surprised he held these beliefs. The core principle of that school of thought is that as long as expanding other's freedoms don't interfere with their own, the government should get out of the way. He made this argument.

He also argued that legalizing the opiates prescribed by doctors to anyone who wanted them would reduce the criminal activity surrounding the drug trade. I believe he's right here. Many gang economies rely heavily on the sale of heroin. But what if we could prevent opiate addicts from turning to heroin and fentanyl, the two opiates responsible for the vast majority of overdose deaths?

That is, allow them to be addicts if they wish. It was this statement from Miron that I had never heard anyone say before: "Being a long term opiate addict is not necessarily a big deal."

He might be right. The addiction can be manageable. People could function reasonably normal. There are many people who deal with chronic pain prescribed an endless amount of painkillers and manage to lead productive lives.

And there are thousands more who get prescriptions for three months and then suddenly cut off. A lot of those people become addicts and become desperate. If their medication their body now needs on a physiological level became legalized, they wouldn't need to turn from the pills the doctor gave them to the far more dangerous world of heroin and fentanyl.

So if he is correct on all fronts, and we reduced the criminality of the addiction and allowed people to continue usage of the pills we now deprive them, would that be so bad?

There were between 59,000 and 65,000 overdose deaths last year. Perhaps, a new idea like this should be considered and taken seriously.

What we're doing now is not working.