



Experts: pain pill crackdown will make cut-off patients turn to heroin

Shannon Behnken

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Brenda Johns' husband, Sam, relies on pain medication, but filling his prescriptions makes them feel like criminals.

"It's wrong," she said. "It's just wrong to make people suffer like this."

A nationwide crackdown on prescription drugs, including Sam's oxycodone, has made it difficult for patients to get their medication. 8 On Your Side found pharmacies are given a dramatically smaller allotment of pills every month, and the government is keeping an eye on how many pills are doled out.

"You feel like you are one of the people who are trying to abuse it, and you're not," she said.

Sam was hit by a car in 1986, and the medication help control his chronic pain. Just like Patti DeSalvo, of Port Richey. Her Walgreens pharmacist cut her off from her pain meds – with no explanation.

"I don't know where I'm going to get my medication next month," DeSalvo said.

Dr. Jeffery Singer, a surgeon and Cato Institute scholar, is taking a stand.

"The scientific literature shows absolutely no long-term harmful benefits of being these medications for long periods of time," Singer said.

Singer insists the government is going after the wrong people. When patients are cut off, with no help, no weaning off the medication, it leads to even more trouble.

"When they get cut off a lot of them go to the street to get it because they are addicted," Singer said. "Not only is oxycodone and oxycontin available on the street but as the CDC reported, heroin is more available on the street than ever before."