



Alternative to Opioid Addiction Policies: New at Reason

Let doctors exercise their best professional judgment and prescribe opioids—free from the chilling effects created by monitoring government agencies.

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There is the alarming rise in the number of chronic pain patients who have become addicted to opioids. And the explosion, in recent years, of opioid prescriptions by health care providers now under government pressure to curtail their prescribing.

This pressure has driven many opioid addicts to the illicit drug market to avoid the pains of withdrawal. There, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), they often find opioid heroin cheaper and sometimes more readily available despite a 50-year "War on Drugs." Thus they become heroin addicts.

Media hysteria begets calls to action. Politicians and the administrative state devise new laws to control this "evil plague." As a surgeon who regularly prescribes painkillers for patients suffering from postoperative pain or painful conditions, I see a painful cognitive dissonance.

Harm reduction, reducing the physical harm an addict does to himself, is preferable to the criminalizing policies of government, surgeon and Cato Institute scholar Jeffrey Singer writes.