



Dr. Jeffrey Singer's Statement On 'An Epidemic Within A Pandemic'

Josh Bloom

April 16, 2021

Dr. Jeffrey Singer, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and ACSH advisor, was asked to submit a statement to the Subcommittee on Health of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which was holding hearings on substance use (and misuse) in the US. Dr. Singer emphasized that illicit fentanyl, not prescription opioids, is responsible for the surge in overdose deaths.

Today the Subcommittee on Health of the House Energy and Commerce Committee is holding hearings entitled “An Epidemic Within a Pandemic: Understanding Substance Use and Misuse in America.” I was asked by the Subcommittee to submit a statement for the record.

In the statement I pointed out that despite a dramatic drop in the number of opioids prescribed to patients in pain, the overdose rate is soaring—in fact, preliminary reports are that it rose more than 27 percent in the past year. And the majority of the overdose deaths are due to illicit fentanyl created in clandestine labs. Also notable is the historic increase in deaths related to methamphetamine and other psycho-stimulants.

I pointed to research showing no correlation between the number of opioids prescribed and the misuse rate or addiction rate for opioids. I argued that the overdose increase is a direct result of drug prohibition and the predictable tendency for prohibition to spur the creation of newer and more potent forms of drugs.

I exhorted the committee to discard policies that focus on health care practitioners treating their patients in pain—which only causes patients to suffer while driving non-medical drug users to more dangerous drugs in the black market—and to avoid codifying the outdated and controversial *2016 Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain* released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Instead, I encouraged lawmakers to pivot to harm reduction policies, including reforming regulations of methadone and buprenorphine prescribing for Medication Assisted Treatment of addiction.

You can read my statement [here](#)