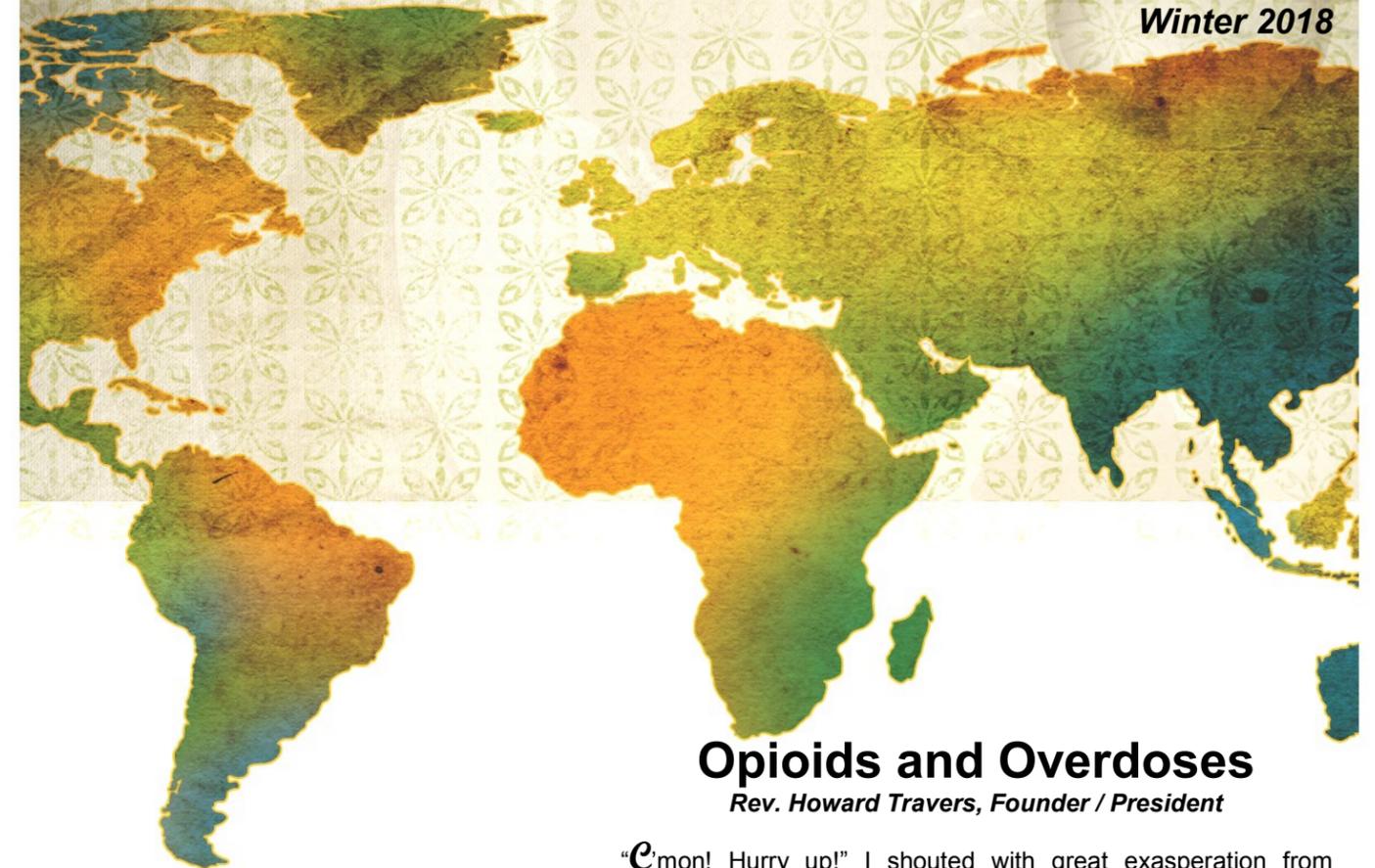


Word of Witness

A PUBLICATION OF WITNESS INTERNATIONAL, INC.

Winter 2018



Opioids and Overdoses

Rev. Howard Travers, Founder / President

"Emon! Hurry up!" I shouted with great exasperation from behind the wheel. I was growing impatient! I was never going to make it to my next appointment on time. The busy two lane highway was crowded with mid-afternoon travelers. Should I risk it and speed pass the long train of slow moving vehicles? Should I seek an alternative route? Just as I was considering my next move, suddenly the car slightly ahead of me began swerving across the center lane into on-coming traffic! Was this driver crazy? Was he drunk? ... asleep? ... or both! On-coming vehicles dodged left and right. Car horns suddenly filled the afternoon air. Just then, the male driver pulled off the roadway only to reenter the busy travel lane again into head-on traffic. "This guy is going to get someone killed!" I snarled. Miraculously, the driver came to an abrupt halt at the next traffic light. Thankfully, that's where it all ended. The young Hispanic male was gone - passed out - completely unresponsive and totally oblivious to the ambulance siren and car horns surrounding him. "Is he alright?" I yelled to the ambulance driver who just happened to be in the long procession. Gaining no response, I held my breath fearing the worse - a heart attack ... a stroke ... some other medical condition? Then I saw it - Narcan - the Opioid reversal medication Naloxone. A spray up the nose, a shot in the thigh, or a push through an IV and within seconds: a miracle. The dead live. A sin forgiven.

Continued on page 2 ...

Witness International, Inc.
Post Office Box 2797
Salisbury, Maryland 21802
www.witnessinternational.org
(410) 749-1343

Witness International, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit ministry to prisoners, ex-offenders, and their families on the Lower Shore of Maryland and abroad. All gifts are entirely tax-deductible. To learn more about our ministry, please visit our website or call us at (410) 749-1343.



Rev. Howard Travers - President
Dana Travers - Secretary
Rev. T. David Hackett - Comptroller
Kenneth Hooper - Legal Counsel
Rev. Jerry Gray

Witness International, Inc.
Post Office Box 2797
Salisbury, Maryland 21802

To make a donation contact:
(410) 749-1343 or www.witnessinternational.org

Witness House of Hope On-Going Needs

- Journals
- Rock Salt
- Trash Bags
- Dish Detergent
- Cleaning Supplies
- HD Laundry Detergent / Dryer Sheets
- Bath Towels (wash cloths, hand towels)
- Financial Sponsorships (\$400 monthly per resident)
- IPADs / Laptops (for employment search and resumes)
- Paper Products (paper towels, toilet tissue, facial tissue, paper plates)



Opioids and Overdoses Continued ...

Sadly, this is the new face of Opioid addiction in America - jeopardizing the safety and well-being of others. Fortunately for this guy and others no one was killed.

The Problem

According to the National Center For Health Statistics at the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention, more than 64,000 Americans died from drug overdoses in 2016 (the last full year of reported statistics), including illicit drugs and prescription Opioids - nearly double in a decade. While it is uncertain how many individuals had their overdose prevented as a result of having Narcan administered in time, preliminary reports indicate that in 83% of cases, Narcan was administered by someone who was present with the user at the time of the actual overdose - not by emergency personnel responding.

The Controversy

Communities overwhelmed by Opioid abuse have proposed limiting the number of times this life-saving medication - Narcan will be administered by emergency services, forcing the victims to pay for it themselves, or just refusing to carry it altogether. Others, including senators and lawmakers, have asked the question of whether or not saving "drug addicts" is worth the resources, especially as many require multiple resuscitations over the course of their struggle. Still others ask if the knowledge that a rescue medication is nearby increases the risk-taking behavior of Opioid addicts, making them more likely to abuse the drugs and worsening the risks to the public.

As the tragic ramifications of abuse - like this overdosed driver, Opioid-addicted newborns, and shattered families incite outrage across the nation, the question has been asked: How many resources should we devote toward a disease that is, at least in part, self-inflicted? While Narcan is not a solution to the problem of Opioid use, it can be a cherished source of security for those struggling with their addiction and for the people who love them.

The Solution

As we face yet another year of skyrocketing Opioid deaths and ask ourselves why we are losing an entire generation when we have the antidote, many Christian organizations - like Witness International have begun to augment recovery outreach and relational ministries with Narcan training. With pending approval, Witness International will soon begin offering training to everyone from pastors and outreach workers to the family members of substance abusers on how to recognize an overdose and save a life through the use of Narcan.

"Why?" you ask. The answer for us is simple. Because dead people don't get saved. Narcan keeps people alive long enough to engage in the community of the church, to hear the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to obtain the resources needed to overcome their addiction. As a premier, reputable ministry to prisoners, ex-offenders, and their families here on the Lower Shore, for us it was a natural next step.

The Call To Action

As we have seen over the years at Witness House of Hope, while the goal for most users attending recovery programs is to get clean, the process is extremely difficult. Because Opioid use permanently changes the structure and chemistry of the brain's reward and pleasure systems and the body's perception of pain, withdrawal is excruciating and the rate of relapse is exceptionally high. Overdoses happen most frequently when an addict relapses after a period of abstinence because their body's tolerance to the drug drops substantially, and the same dose that may have only barely brought a mild high previously, is now lethally potent.

An Opioid overdose depresses the user's respiratory and central nervous system so much that they stop breathing, and the resulting lack of oxygen quickly leads to brain and vital organ injury and minutes later to cardiac arrest. This means that one of the most lethal periods in an Opioid addict's struggle - the time they are most likely to overdose - is when they are trying to get clean.

Despite the challenges, recovery can and does happen. One of our Witness House of Hope residents - Zak (featured on the opposite page) is a prime example of how the power of the Gospel, accountability, structure, and healthy relationships can help substance abusers overcome the strong grips of addiction.

The opposite of addiction is not sobriety. It's connection. If the Christian church has anything to offer those hurting from Opioid addictions, it is connection: connection to a community, connection to resources like Witness International and Witness House of Hope, and most critically, connection to a God who saves. Thankfully, the fellowship of congregations that are willing to pursue and love those with a disease as complex and as spiritually entangling as substance abuse is growing. With their help, the millions beside us ensnared by Opioids can find the God who loves them no matter what. That is the hope Witness International offers.

References

Stokes, L. (2017, August). Hope for America's Opioid epidemic is grace in a syringe. *Christianity Today*, August. Retrieved from www.christianitytoday.com.

Tell a friend about us!

Visit us online at www.witnessinternational.org and on FB!



"Help and Confidence"

Witness House of Hope

For as long as I can remember, I have craved everything that makes me not have to feel things. If there was a substance or a behavior that could mute my emotions, I was all for it.

My parents got divorced when I was 12 years old. Ever since that time I always felt empty. I turned to alcohol and other substances when I turned 14 and I never looked back. My life was centered around getting and using [drugs], that's all that ever mattered to me. Soon, I found myself acting out - lying and stealing to obtain said mind or mood-altering substances.

As my addiction progressed, numerous times I found myself with a long list of charges [coupled with] a heavy addiction. After jail and many attempts in rehab, I finally realized something needed to change. More importantly, that I could not overcome this matter alone. Staying sober was one obstacle, but accepting help and inviting a Higher Power into my life was something I always struggled with. But this time, something was different. Through attending church, actually listening in meetings and willingness on my part, I have come to believe in a power greater than myself.

It's relieving to know that any issue I have I can take it to God and turn the outcome over to Him through prayer. I truly believe that as long as I continue prayer, meditation, and staying hungry [for God] and sobriety, that I will be victorious "one day at a time." Armed with a God of my understanding, I now believe anything is possible in my future.

I can only be grateful for all of the help and confidence I have received from Rev. Travers and Witness International. I would not be where I am today without God and this program.

~ Zak

Matthew 25:40

Whatever you did for one of the least of these, you did for Me.

