

# Stopping The Opioid Crisis: 7 Things Only Reporters Can Do

*Reporters and editors can help fix the opioid and drug abuse by a slight shift in how they report on the problem. No special knowledge necessary.*

PHILADELPHIA, PA, USA, July 11, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- All institutions and organizations, especially at the community level, have an important contribution to make in curbing drug abuse: none more so than journalists, reporters and editors who are uniquely positioned to do so.



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*Josh Hammond, CEO,  
FreeAmericanNews*

Josh Hammond, CEO of FreeAmericanNews, a new online, Trump Twitter-free magazine about politics and culture, says, “What makes a good human-interest story too often distorts the nature of the drug problem, confuses us about the true causes of drug abuse and in the end we are all somewhat misled.”

With the exception of alcohol, opiate dependency is “humanity’s oldest, most widespread, and most persistent drug problem,” according Harvard Medical School. Before today’s focus on opioids, it was crack cocaine, meth, heroin and even methadone, a drug used to help cure heroin addiction. Illegal drug use moves in cycles, often coming full circle.

Drug abuse should be defined as the use of any illegal drug, even though two of the most harmful drugs and leading causes of death are the use of alcohol and tobacco. They are only technically age restrictive, but easier to circumvent than running a stop sign.

## The 7 Things Only Reporters Can Do

1. The sooner the better, reference alcohol and tobacco as the two most abused drugs. They are only age-restricted, but they are among the leading causes of death. It’s a good way to end an article—a community reminder about the consequences of individual behavior we all end up paying for.
2. Put all drug abuse (use of illegal drugs) in proper context of America’s century-old [drug addiction](#). The opioid crisis is just the latest cycle of addiction. Only a recent editorial in the New York Times had the proper context.
3. Avoid leading off with a sensational anecdote that is not representative of the using population. Reporters are trained to do this in order to get readers’ attention, but the exceptional profile or experience distorts the data and trendlines.
4. Avoid misleading data charts. Display trend data in full context. Here is [a good example](#) of how it should be reported. Drug abuse among teenagers has remained constant over the last 30 years,

below 20 percent, mostly with those who are experimenting with drug use for the first time.

5. Avoid white images for opioid use and black images for heroin use or scraggly-haired teens for pot use. Opioid addiction was called to the attention of the nation by white politicians campaigning for president in a predominately white state, especially then Governor of New Jersey Chris Christie in New Hampshire when his poll numbers started to tank.

6. Avoid the use of healthy ex-addicts talking about their misery: the medium is the message. Kids with low self-esteem want to be like that person: healthy, wealthy and wiser. The glamour of recovery.

7. There is big money in drug abuse enforcement, treatment and prevention. Billions over the years is mostly wasted to support the status quo according to the first United Nations Global Commission on Drugs. The Commission included some of the world's best thought-leaders. It included former Fed Reserve Chairman Paul Volker, Sir Richard Branson best known with his development of Virgin Airlines, former head of the UN Kofi Annan and former US Secretary of State George Schultz . If you are a cop you will say enforcement is the answer, if you are a doc you will say that treatment is the answer, if you are a parent you will say education in schools is the answer and so on. Each solution has its own constituency. Its own money pot.

“This kind of reporting,” Hammond adds, “will serve as a much-needed public referee for the bickering in the drug abuse prevention community where drug users are the pawns.”

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