



CHAPTER 1

Is There Really a Crisis?

If your eyes are open and your ears are listening, you know that opioid bullets are flying everywhere.

The answer is an emphatic YES!

It's a question I get every day: *Is there really a crisis?*

I used to think to myself before responding, what planet is this person living on? *Is there really a crisis?* Could those asking this question today, in 2021, really be serious or are they living in a parallel universe? How could people be completely oblivious to what is and has been in the news, plus dozens of television special reports for many, many years? Maybe there are still people living in a happy state of total denial that opioid misuse and the addiction consequences exist.

How could medical doctors, trusted professionals, prescribe a habit-forming, addictive number of pain pills to their patients? To me, it's unfathomable.

And, as the opioid crisis stands today, there is no concrete direction to turn this national nightmare on a trajectory of recovery. The numbers speak—no they shout:

- ✓ There are 330,000,000 Americans, of which 15% are addicted. In real numbers, that's 49,500,000 addicted Americans.

FORTY-NINE MILLION FIVE HUNDRED THOUSAND!

- ✓ Only 10% of the 49,500,000 addicted Americans seek addiction help, a dismally low percentage.
- ✓ Of the 4,950,000 Americans seeking help, 95% relapse, which means 4,702,500 Americans are still addicted.

FOUR MILLION SEVEN HUNDRED TWO THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED!

- ✓ Those 4,702,500 individuals negatively impact 7 other people every day! **SEVEN!**

- ✓ An estimated **450,000** people died from an overdose using prescription opioids and illicit opioids from 1999 to 2018. **FOUR HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND!**

- ✓ Of the 450,000 total deaths, 230,000 were from prescription opioids. **TWO HUNDRED THIRTY THOUSAND!**

- ✓ In 2019, 139 people died every day in the United States from opioids. That equates to 50,735 individuals who died in a recent year.

FIFTY THOUSAND SEVEN HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE!

- ✓ Service veterans are twice as likely to die from an opioid overdose. And combat troops are at a higher risk of addiction.

✓ In the 12 months from June 2019 to May 2020, Americans hit the highest number ever of recorded overdose deaths.

These are OMG statistics. How do you wrap your head around numbers in the millions, anyway? Do these numbers have your attention? When times are turbulent, and uncertainty and unrest prevail, this is when the opioid crisis accelerates. We are in *those times* right now. And it is a horrendous mess.

With the divisiveness in our legislative bodies and a country that is splintered politically, can the opioid crisis be solved in this new decade? There is a lack of racial equity that begs to be addressed. Americans are reeling from the effects of COVID-19, resulting in loss of jobs and businesses, and overwhelmed food lines. Previous epidemiological studies of similar outbreaks supported evidence of a mental toll with an increase in suicides.

Here's something else to chew on. From the time of the commencement of the Civil War throughout World War I, World War II, Korean War, Vietnam, and Iraq-Afghanistan wars, the deaths of Americans were staggering. The number killed from 1861 through 2018 is 1,370,422, a span of 157 years.

If your eyes are open and your ears are listening, you know that opioid bullets are flying everywhere. The clock is ticking. In just NINE years since statistics were first generated, deaths of 500,000+ Americans have been attributed to opioid overdosing. This is more than 36% of all deaths generated from ALL American-connected wars! What could the next nine years generate?

What would happen if a plane crashed every day with 200-plus passengers onboard ... all killed? Would there be an uproar? You bet there would be. Opioids do this every day, year after year. Yet, WHERE is the outrage? Where is your outrage?

YES, America ... we have a crisis! **The Opioid Epidemic** is here.

Are there solutions? YES. But to get to solutions, we must deal with the root of the causation and eradicate it.