

The Opioid Epidemic in America

1. Introduction

1. Provide shocking statistics on the number of opioid overdose deaths per year.
2. Give background on what opioids are and how they were increasingly prescribed.
3. **Thesis:** The opioid epidemic arose from a combination of overprescription, lack of education, and the highly addictive nature of these drugs.

2. Overprescription of Opioids

1. Discuss the aggressive marketing tactics used by pharmaceutical companies.
2. Describe the pressure medical professionals felt to prioritize pain management.
3. Indicate how this led to opioids being prescribed for more mild, chronic conditions.

3. Lack of Understanding of Addiction Risk

1. Outline the false messaging that opioids were portrayed as non-addictive.
2. Highlight the lack of training for doctors on screening for addiction.
3. Note patients were not properly educated on the drugs' potential for dependence.
4. Link to how this allowed the epidemic to take hold before risks were realized.

4. Biology of Opioid Addiction

1. Discuss how opioids activate the brain's reward system and cause euphoria.
2. Describe how dependence and withdrawal symptoms quickly develop with prolonged use.
3. Explore why addiction is a lifelong, relapsing disease that requires comprehensive treatment.

5. Conclusion

1. Summarize the key factors that sparked and fueled the opioid crisis.
2. Stress the need for honest education, policy reform, and access to addiction care.