Wuhan - Infamous before COVID-19

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic started in Wuhan, China, Bloomberg.com reported that at least two Wuhan factories were producing the precursors for fentanyl and methamphetamine "by the ton."

In 2018, more than 44,000 deaths involving these two drugs alone were reported in the United States. \(^1\)

Ironically, the coronavirus that emerged in Wuhan has now disrupted the fentanyl and meth supply chains, causing a ripple effect that has cut into the profits of the Mexican drug cartels. \(^2\)

COVID-19 and Addiction Adds Immeasurable Stress to American Families

NPR reports that Vinton County, Ohio, has been on the front lines of the opioid and now the meth, crisis in the United States for several years. \(^3\)

In households where people were making meth, kids were living in environments where they were:

- Not fed
- Not clothed properly
- Not sent to school
- Mistreated

With social distancing and schools and churches closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic;

- people (teachers and clergy) most likely to come into contact with abused children don’t see them anymore
- CPS has lost its connections with these children

And with the introduction of COVID-19, there’s more stress on households already dealing with addiction. We’re just seeing the beginning of it – with:

- job loss and unemployment
- people are depressed
- their kids can’t go to school
- they can’t go to AA
- they can't go to NA because those meetings are canceled
- They can't go to their normal support groups

This is not only happening in Vinton County, Ohio, it is happening here and all across the United States. The potential effects on American families are unparalleled.

NIDA Director Comments on COVID-19 Crisis and Addiction

Dr. Nora Volkow, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) recently addressed the COVID-19 pandemic with respect to drug addiction.\(^6,7\)

- We’re hearing from multiple sources that it’s become harder for patients to be able to access treatment.
- Much is still unknown, but... persons who smoke, vape, or use certain drugs will be at increased risk for infection and its more severe consequences.
- Persons who are isolated and stressed—as much of the population is during a pandemic—frequently turn to substances to alleviate their negative feelings.
- Social support is crucial for persons in recovery, whereas social isolation is a risk factor for relapse. [Therefore] Those in recovery will face stresses and heightened urges to use substances and will be at greatly increased risk for relapse.

NEEDED NOW

- Development of strategies to identify at-risk populations (and their dependents) and ways to connect with them while access to care is limited due to COVID-19 social isolation policies.

Direct all questions, comments and other response to Dr. Nicholas Goeders, Head of Pharmacology, Toxicology & Neuroscience (LSU Health Shreveport) and Executive Director Louisiana Addiction Research Center: Ngoede@lsuhsc.edu or 318-675-7850
Reference List


