

## **HEROIN USE INCREASES IN DETROIT , ELSEWHERE SOME EXPERTS PREDICT IT WILL REPLACE CRACK**

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Author: WILLIAM KLEINKNECHT Free Press Staff Writer

Louisa M. was a drug addict **in** a southwest **Detroit** neighborhood where crack houses were as plentiful as candy stores and crack vials littered children's playgrounds on Sunday mornings.

But none of the vials were hers. Louisa's drug was **heroin** , and she says her habit came with none of the violence, sickness and death that so often plagues crack addicts.

"I tried cocaine and didn't care for it," said Louisa, 30, a resident of the S.H.A.R. House drug clinic **in Detroit** who asked that her full name not be used. "I liked the serene feeling that **heroin** gave me. I liked going into a nod."

**Heroin** , the scourge of urban America before being overshadowed by the crack epidemic **in** the 1980s, may be headed for a comeback **in Detroit** and across the country, say drug counselors and law enforcement officials.

**In** the last several months, signs of the drug's resurgence **in Detroit** have been seen **in** the growing number of **heroin** addicts seeking treatment and **in** the increasing amount of **heroin** seized by police.

Police say the **heroin** they are seeing on the streets is far purer than **in** the past and that dealers are giving discounts to attract customers.

"What we have found lately is that some people are using crack to get the initial rush and then using **heroin** to make it a softer landing," said Rudy Thomas, commander of the **Detroit** police narcotics unit.

Crack addicts still make up the vast majority of residents **in Detroit** 's treatment centers, and some facilities said they have not seen an **increase in heroin** users. But the largest facilities say the upward trend is unmistakable.

S.H.A.R. House on **Detroit** 's west side had seen few **heroin** addicts for several years, but they have made up about 5 to 6 percent of new admissions **in** recent months, said Curtis Jennings, deputy executive director.

The Eastwood clinic on the city's east side has seen **heroin** users **increase** from about 5 percent of its clients to nearly 20 percent **in** the past two or three months, said Steven Candela, clinical manager.

"There is just so much more access to **heroin** now," Candela said.

The number of **heroin** users seeking treatment **in** publicly funded clinics around Michigan increased from 1,083 **in** the 1987-88 state fiscal year to 2,006 last year, according to the state Department of Public Health.

But the total of people seeking treatment for other drugs was also up sharply.

"We are not showing a tremendous jump . . ." said Richard Calkins, the department's chief of substance abuse data. "But part of that could be that these are experienced users who are not likely to get into trouble or end up **in** emergency rooms or treatment."

Mark Kleinman, a Harvard University professor who specializes **in** drug-abuse trends, agreed that the **increase in heroin use** may not be fully reflected **in** statistics on treatment admissions and arrests.

People introduced to **heroin** today are not likely to end up **in** treatment or run afoul of the law for several years, making them invisible to normal drug-abuse indicators, he said.

Kleinman, a top outside adviser to Bob Martinez, the nation's drug policy director, predicted last month that **heroin** would overtake cocaine as the drug of choice by the late 1990s.

The professor said he based his findings on evidence that people are coming to grips with crack's deeply harmful effects on their lives.

"Crack **use** has an extremely short life cycle because it is such a punishing drug," Kleinman said. "We'll probably have half of the cocaine **use in** 1998 that we have now."

Cocaine and **heroin** are both white powders that can be injected, smoked or snorted, but cocaine is a stimulant and **heroin** is a depressant.

Drug counselors say it is hard to maintain a cocaine addiction over many years. The drug retards appetite for food, leaving many users emaciated and prone to illness. The short cocaine high and immediate craving for more of the drug often can lead users to break the law or abuse family and friends.

By contrast, a dose of **heroin** lulls a user into a relaxed state that lasts for hours. Unlike many crack users, **heroin** addicts can hold down a job, pay the bills and, if they're careful, avoid any long-term health problems.

"The **heroin** addict is typically an experienced user **in** the late 30s or older who may have been using the drug for 15 or 20 years, not necessarily on a daily basis," Calkins said.

Some experts say federal and state governments are not doing enough to prepare for **heroin - use increases** .

The Office of National Drug Control Policy says it has no firm evidence that a **heroin** epidemic is likely but is preparing for an upsurge.

The office has engaged ethnographers who question street people **in** big cities to find out if something is happening that is not reflected **in** statistics.

"We're not going to let a **heroin** epidemic sneak up on this country like cocaine did **in** the 1970s," Martinez said.

## **HEROIN ON THE RISE**

People who sought treatment for **heroin** addiction at public clinics **in** Michigan. Also listed is the percentage that **heroin** users made up of people seeking treatment for all drugs.

**Heroin** users Pct of patients

seeking treatment who were **heroin** users

1987-88 1,083 23.2 pct

1988-89 1,466 21.6 pct

1989-90 1,890 28.4 pct

1990-91 2,006 27.6pct

Source: Michigan Department of Public Health

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