



Opioid Abuse Among Our Youth



On March 15, 2016 the [CDC](#) released new guidelines pertaining to the prescription of opioids for chronic pain. The CDC stated that these guidelines are paramount because, "the United States is currently experiencing an epidemic of prescription opioid overdoses." Additionally the [American Society of Addiction Management](#) stated that in 2014 alone, nearly half a million adolescents were non-medical users of pain relievers, with 168,000 having developed an addiction to the prescription pain relievers.¹ Individuals addicted to pain medication come in a variety of shapes and sizes, some of which include student athletes who have been prescribed pain medication after a sports injury.

The [Youth Sports Safety Alliance](#) recognizes the urgency of this issue, and at this year's Youth Sports Safety Summit we were very fortunate to have Jennifer Weiss Burke, Executive Director of [Healing Addictions in Our Community](#) and [Serenity Mesa Recovery Center](#) present "*Opiate Abuse Among Teenage Athletes: What You Need to Know.*" During her presentation Burke uncovered her personal

struggle as the parent of an athlete addicted to heroin.

In today's sports driven culture, many athletes are told to play through the pain and injuries. Burke's son, Cameron Weiss, had been playing sports since he was four years old. Burke said, "his ultimate goal was to get a wrestling scholarship."

However in his sophomore year his athletic endeavors were impacted with three big injuries one right after the other. Cameron broke his collarbone twice and got cauliflower ear. After his first broken collarbone Cameron had to have surgery and was prescribed Percocet, an opioid, for the pain. Because of his third injury of cauliflower ear, Cameron was in constant pain. Jennifer said, "the injuries started in 2009. He was a full-blown addict by 2010."

As time continued, Cameron's escape from pain shifted from prescription painkillers, such as Percocet, to heroin. He began to fail AP English and no longer wanted to wrestle. Burke immediately began seeking help for her son, after many attempts with counseling through therapists, psychologists, and other medical professionals, Cameron finally admitted to his mother that he was using heroin. He spent the next two years in and out of treatment centers. However the addiction "took him over" Burke said, and Cameron was constantly angry and moody. After multiple arrests, Burke convinced the judge to send her son to a treatment center instead of jail.

In August of 2011, after a family trip, Cameron went out with a friend and came home late. At 7:30 the next morning, mother's intuition kicked in and Burke went to go check on Cameron; he had overdosed and passed away. He was with his best friend the night before, another heroin addict and former wrestler, whose dad was the wrestling coach.

Cameron Weiss' story was featured in *Sports Illustrated* last July. The article focused on three athletes with heroin addictions. Every parent wants their child featured in *Sports Illustrated*, but not for this reason, said Burke.

Now What?

The [CDC](#)'s new guidelines focus on three key points:

1. USE NONOPIOID THERAPIES – Don't use opioids routinely for chronic pain. Use nonopioid therapies alone or in combination with opioids. Only consider opioid therapy if you expect benefits for pain and function to outweigh risks.
2. START LOW AND GO SLOW – When opioids are used, start with the lowest effective dosage and short-acting opioids instead of extended-release/long-acting opioids.
3. FOLLOW UP – Regularly assess whether opioids are improving pain and function without causing harm. If benefits do not outweigh harms, optimize other therapies and work with patients to taper opioids.²

For more information and resources please visit [cdc.gov](#).

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality. (2015). Behavioral health trends in the United States: Results from the 2014 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-FRR1-2014/NSDUH-FRR1-2014.pdf>

² Dowell D, Haegerich TM, Chou R. CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain — United States, 2016. MMWR Recomm Rep 2016;65:1–49. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.rr6501e1>

YSSA Member Spotlight



THE MICHELI CENTER
FOR SPORTS INJURY PREVENTION

In April 2013, [The Micheli Center - For Sports Injury Prevention](#) opened its doors to the public and immediately started to address the sports injury epidemic. The idea behind the facility began nearly twenty years ago when Lyle Micheli, MD, was reviewing the original 1974 charter for the [Sports Medicine Division of the Orthopedics Department at Boston Children's](#)

[Hospital](#). In that charter, three goals were laid out - to diagnose, treat, and prevent sports injuries.

Expert staff visit teams from local schools, youth organizations, and elite travel clubs to provide evidence-based injury prevention techniques on common injuries, such as ACL tears and concussions. On site, staff provide three hour-long Injury Prevention Evaluations (IPE) to provide young athletes and their families opportunities to lower their personal risk of injury. The Micheli Center also initiated specialized programs to help under-served children with sports injury prevention, such as sedentary children and adaptive physical education students.

To read more about [The Micheli Center](#), including ongoing and upcoming community outreach and education programs, please visit our [website](#).

New To YSSA

Please join us in welcoming our newest YSSA members!

[August Heart](#)

[Eastern Pennsylvania Youth Soccer Association, Inc.](#)

[Orthopaedic Foundation for Active Lifestyles, Inc.](#)

Want to be our Next Member Spotlight?

In each newsletter we highlight a YSSA member who is actively advocating for youth sport safety. If your organization would like to be considered, please send a short description of your organization and any recent activity to:

jessicah@nata.org by April 21, 2016. Goods and services that can be sold are not eligible for feature in the newsletter.

Here's what we are looking for:

- History of your organization
- Community outreach programs
- Upcoming or recently held events
- Any other youth athlete safety initiatives

TAKE ACTION!

Update Your Member Information

Please update your information with our quick and easy [online form](#). This form includes information about YSSA member benefits and will serve as the new enrollment form for future YSSA members.

ARE YOU UP TO THE CHALLENGE? Help the alliance gain support by forwarding the enrollment [form](#) to five like-minded organizations who also advocate for youth athlete safety.



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