

# HEROIN

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died from heroin overdoses than from car crashes.

The forum centered around abuse starting with such prescription medications as oxycodone and Vicodin, which can lead to continued street-level opiate use, such as heroin.

An audience member asked Michigan State Police Detective Sgt. Keith Pillar, of the Region of the Irish Hills Narcotics Office, whether law enforcement noticed a positive shift in the fight against this type of drug dealing and abuse.

"I think it's a growing problem," Pillar answered. "Unfortunately, I think we

are still in the infancy stage of it."

He said Lenawee County is not immune to the issue.

"It's just as rampant here as everywhere else," Pillar said about prescription drug and opiate abuse in the county.

Across Michigan in 1999 there were 99 opiate-related deaths, according to the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. This figure jumped to 840 in 2013.

"One of the reasons I really wanted to have this conversation is because there are proactive measures we can take as community members," Driskell said. "That's really the whole point of being here, is to help each other and learn from each other."

Leigh Jameson-Heise,

coordinator for the Lenawee County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, said one place people can start in abuse prevention is with prescription pills. From individuals "doctor shopping" to get their hands on more pills, to sharing them with another person, she said abuse of medications is a root cause of the current heroin epidemic.

Jameson-Heise said the state's prescription monitoring system needs to be improved and modernized, so it can be properly used without issues at any time by those legally dispensing pills. The system enables a practitioner to determine if patients are receiving controlled substances from other providers and to assist in the prevention of

prescription drug abuse. Jameson-Heise said safely disposing of unused unwanted or expired medications also is important. She said this can be done at various police stations throughout the county.

Driskell said a state task force is reviewing the prescription monitoring system, but added there isn't a single fix. She added these conversations must continue.

An addiction summit for Lenawee County will take place from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. March 24 at Siena Heights University's Benincasa Hall.

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