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Street drugs a lethal menace

EDITORIAL

IT HAS BEEN A TRAGIC WEEK for at least two families in Dufferin County.

Following more than a year without a recorded death due to an opioid-related drug overdose, we lost two young men in the space of just a few days over the past week.

The losses, while, as previously mentioned, are tragic, they serve as what should be a needless reminder to the public to steer clear of what emergency service providers are describing as ?street drugs'.

It is suspected the deadly concoction that killed 19-year-old Mason Corrie and 20-year-old Bryan White were counterfeit Xanax pills laced with fentanyl. Fentanyl has almost become something of a fad for the illegal underground over the past number of years, with the number of deaths relating to the drug skyrocketing since 2016.

Opioids, specifically, are a family of drugs that are usually prescribed to relieve pain. Examples include codeine, oxycodone, morphine, hydromorphone and fentanyl.

Speaking at a community engagement session held at Westside Secondary School in 2017, Dufferin EMS Deputy Chief Paul dePrinse stated even the smallest amount of fentanyl, similar even to a pinch of salt, is enough to kill somebody. He stated that fentanyl is between 50 and 100 times more potent than morphine.

Recent reports released by Health Canada state that, in the first half of 2018, there were 2,066 apparent opioid-related deaths across Canada, 638 of them here in Ontario. Between January 2016 and June 2018, more than 9,000 lives were lost in incidents related to an opioid overdose.

Perhaps the most telling statistic is that between 2016 and 2017, the rate of emergency department visits for opioid poisonings increased by 73 percent in Ontario. ? proof that this is a recent trend, and a concerning one at that.

The report also states that, based on available data, 71 percent of suspected opioid-related overdoses occurred among men, and were most common among individuals between the ages of 20 and 29. That, to us at least, suggests another trend. At least three of the individuals whose deaths were attributed to opioid poisoning were men in and around that age group.

So, what can we, as a community, do to stem the effects of these drugs and the heartbreaking repercussions they inflict upon families across the country? We have to first acknowledge that, even as a small town, we do have a problem. Then, upon accepting that fact, we have to talk about it. To anyone we can.

Education truly is the first line of defense against almost any problem. Take the initiative and discuss the issue with your family ? whether that be your parents, children, siblings, aunt, uncle, whoever. Bring it up over lunch at the office, while drinking coffee at your local Tim Hortons, heck, if you're a student reading this, bring it up at school.

The best way to fix something is to face it head on.

While it's true that there really isn't a right answer here, or a quick fix, sometimes the littlest things make all the difference. Who's to say whether or not a conversation, a slight education, would have prevented any of the 9,000-plus deaths in Canada over the past three years. One thing is for sure though, it certainly wouldn't have done any harm. It may even have saved a life.

So, let's embrace our issues and talk about them. If it helps to prevent even one more death in our community, wouldn't you say

that's worth it?