

## **GATEWAY DRUGS**

**A new study suggests that abuse of prescription opioids may be a first step on the path toward injecting illicit drugs like heroin.**

**Researchers found that four out of five injecting drug users misused a prescribed opioid drug before they injected heroin.**

**The study found that risk factors for misusing prescription drugs were a family history of drug misuse and access to prescription medications.**

**The University of Philadelphia studied 50 injecting drug users between the ages of 16 and 25 who had all misused a prescription drug in the past three months.**

**Nearly three quarters of participants had been prescribed a prescription opioid for dental procedures or sports injuries.**

**Most had one or more family members that had misused one or more substances.**

**(Source: International Journal of Drug Policy, 25 July 2011)**

### ***DRUG ADVISORY COUNCIL COMMENTS***

***This study which identified risk factors for injecting drug use is useful to identify those at risk.***

***Once identified, careful monitoring of those at risk can watch for signs of progression to illicit drug use.***

***Cannabis is a gateway drug to injecting drug use as well.***

***It is now clear that both prescription opioids and illicit drug use are gateways into injecting other drugs like heroin, cocaine and ICE.***

***Identified illicit drug users should be directed into court supervised drug rehabilitation that has as its specific objective of getting users off drugs quickly and permanently.***

**THE DRUG ADVISORY COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA SUPPORTS-  
More detoxification & rehabilitation that gets illicit drug user's drug free.  
Court ordered and supervised detoxification & rehabilitation.  
Less illicit drug users, drug pushers and drug related crimes.**