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of marketing, of customer service, of convenience. So the stories dovetailed organically into one large tale, but it was really two stories of the marketing of drugs in America.

A.G.: *You write about the pain and pain treatment revolution in America. Can you explain that?*

S.Q.: (The pain revolution) was really instigated mainly by pain specialists and then later by the pharmaceutical companies that made the medicine. Together, the expertise of the former combined with the megaphone and money of the latter created this new, conventional wisdom that these pills can be used for pain treatment without addiction – “virtually non-addictive” was the phrase – when used for treating pain. So the pendulum began to swing in the '80s: that it was OK to use these pills for cancer treatment. But the pendulum kept swinging, and it went far, far the other way. By the mid-'90s it was the case where people began to believe that it was OK for the pills to be used for all manner of pain.

This created – beginning in the late '80s but really through the '90s and into the current millennium – just an enormous amount of prescribing for all kinds of pain: the extraction of wisdom teeth, any kind of surgery. There was this enormous rising sea level of pills that reached every corner of America because doctors were prescribing it. This was not instigated by drug mafias. Had it been only drug mafias doing it, its effect would be minuscule, comparatively. But you have millions of doctors buying into this idea. Plus, they've got patients in agony, more patients demanding, fix me, fix me doctor. The

doctors really didn't have very many tools for treating pain except for these pills.

And it did help some people. I think by and large, though, it did not help as many people as originally intended and the wanton, widespread prescribing of these pills for almost anything led to an

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SAM QUINONES

enormous increase of pain pills all across America, which was largely unregulated. The doctors did not pay too much attention to people when they were using these pills, if they were using them correctly. And so people began getting addicted to them. If those people didn't get addicted to them, maybe their children got into the pills and those kids began getting addicted. That invariably has led to heroin addiction all across the country, and that's why you're seeing heroin addiction in Tennessee, in Idaho. These are not states that anyone ever thought of as heroin

hubs, but because there where pills there first, the heroin then comes, and that's what these guys, the Xalisco Boys, have figured out.

A.D.: *In doing the research for this book, you interviewed many people, including a number of addicts and their families. I'm interested to hear how your perception of addiction changed over the course of your research.*

S.Q.: It changed enormously. As I got into it, I realized, you don't get addicted; you and your family get addicted. Your parents, your brother, your grandparents, everybody gets addicted with you because they all have to deal with you as you

devolve into the kind of lying, cheating addict. I came to view addiction as far less of a choice.

Of course it's very important to understand that if you choose to use one of these drugs, that is your choice. Once you start using these drugs recreationally, addiction is very often right around the corner. I really came to view the parents' plight as something very important to show, to illustrate, because I felt no one was listening to them. And so many parents feel all alone. They don't say anything, they're stigmatized, they're horribly ashamed that their son or daughter is a junkie. You've got pills everywhere, and then when people get addicted to it, no one talks about it. It's all very quiet. It's tough to say, “My daughter was hooking on the street and she died related to her heroin addiction” or, “My son who was a football player was found dead on a McDonald's bathroom toilet with a needle in his arm.” That's very tough for people to say.

A.D.: *After doing this book, do you have hope or optimism that America can get through this epidemic?*

S.Q.: I always have hope. Human beings are not automatons. People change, respond and adapt, and there's no reason to think this has to go on and on. I believe in Americans' accountability. I believe that we are in fact a country that does not wait around for things to happen for us or to us. But we take initiative, and when you do that, it is the opposite of the dope addiction. Even though it's common to say, well, we're a country with lots of drugs, we're a dope-addicted country. I really think it's un-American to just sit there and let stuff happen to you. So this is a very, I believe, un-American scourge. I think there's a basic impulse in this country that is about acting, taking accountability, seizing the initiative, self-reliance. And all of that is contrary to the slavery of addiction to dope.

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