Drugs

**America's opioid epidemic is on track to claim 1 million lives by 2020. Every day, more than 175 Americans die from drug overdoses -- the equivalent of a 737 crashing and killing all the passengers on board every single day. *(USA Today, as it appeared in The Week magazine, February 9, 2018)***

**Americans last year filled 254 million prescriptions for pain-killing opioid drugs such as OxyContin and Percocet – enough to medicate every American adult around the clock for a month. *(Fortune, as it appeared in The Week magazine, November 25, 2011)***

**More than 52,000 Americans died of a drug overdose in 2015 -- the first time that grim total has exceeded 50,000. About 73 percent of all overdose deaths in 2015 were from prescription opioids and heroin -- up from 57 percent in 2010. *(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 10, 2017)***

**More Americans now die from misuse of prescription drugs - including antidepressants, painkillers, and sleeping pills -- than from heroin and cocaine, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported. Fatalities due to drug overdoses have been rising dramatically in the U.S. since 1999, largely because of the abuse of prescription drugs. *(Los Angeles Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, February 8, 2008)***

**Americans pay far more for pharmaceuticals and medical tests than people do in countries where a single agency negotiates prices. A prescription for Nexium, a heartburn drug, for example, costs $215 in the U.S., but only $58 in Spain, $42 in England, and $23 in the Netherlands. An MRI costs $1,145 on average in the U.S., $350 in Australia, and $138 in Switzerland. *(Vox.com,. as it appeared in The Week magazine, May 2, 2014)***

**Americans spent $300 billion on prescription drugs in 2009, a 5.1 percent increase over the previous year. Generic-drug sales rose 5.9 percent and now account for three-quarters of all dispensed prescriptions in the U.S. *(Medical Marketing and Media, as it appeared in The Week magazine, April 16, 2010)***

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**Alarm on antibiotics: The World Health Organization has sounded the alarm on drug-resistant infections, warning of the dearth of research into new antibiotics. Around 700,000 people die each year because medicines that once cured their conditions no longer work; the United Nations estimates that superbugs could kill 10 million people a year by 2050. Yet a new WHO report noted that most of the 60 new antimicrobial drugs in development are merely variations of existing products, and that very few target the most dangerous drug resistant infections. "We urgently need research and development," co-author Sarah Paulin tells The New York Times. "We still have a window of opportunity, but we need to ensure there is investment now so we don't run out of options for future generations." One issue is that antibiotics aren't very profitable -- unlike drugs for longer-term health issues, they're typically taken for only a week or two at a time. Several small U.S. drug companies have gone bankrupt in recent months, in part because of their failure to make money from new antibiotics. *(The Week magazine, February 7, 2020)***

**One out of 10 Americans is now taking antidepressants – double the percentage that was taking them in 1996. The use of psychotherapy, meanwhile, is declining, because of insurance company restrictions on payment. *(Bloomberg News, as it appeared in The Week magazine, August 14, 2009)***

**Over 110,000 active-duty Army troops were taking prescribed antidepressants, narcotics, sedatives, anti-psychotics, and anti-anxiety drugs last year. More than 6 percent of the Army’s active troops are currently on antidepressants. *(Los Angeles Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, April 20, 2012)***

**Reserpine, a drug widely used since the 1950s to reduce high blood pressure, is actually not new. As one of the most active components of the tropical rauwolfia plant, it has been used for centuries in Africa and India as a cure for mental illness. (*Isaac Asimov’s Book of Facts, p. 231)***

**In 19th-century Britain, opium for babies was marketed under the name “Quietness.” *(The Daily Chronicles)***

**Caffeine was rushed into mainstream use because it benefited industrialized economies, making workers far more productive. The spread of tea and coffee also engendered a demand for sugar and, in turn, slavery. *(The Week magazine, July 3, 2021)***

**About 6 million children younger than age 11 have parents who suffer from drug addiction. Child welfare officials removed about 90,000 children and teens from their families in 2017 because of a parent who had a substance abuse problem. *(USA Today, as it appeared in The Week magazine, November 8, 2019)***

**About 60 mg of cocaine was used in each serving of Coca Cola until 1903 when the company claimed to have removed the ingredient. *(Charlotte Lowe, in Fact-O-Pedia, p. 57)***

**Cocaine use in the U.S. has fallen by 40 percent since 2006. Some experts attribute the drop to a doubling of street price and successful interdiction against South American production facilities and traffickers. Others say that cocaine has simply become "uncool" with drug abusers now focusing on prescription painkillers. *(CSMonitor.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, July 26, 2013)***

**A friend of mine confused her Valium with her birth control pills. She had 14 kids, but she doesn't really care. *(Rocky Mountain News)***

**The opioid epidemic has cost the U.S. economy at least $631 billion since 2014, mostly in unrealized earnings of victims who died from the highly addictive painkillers. The price tag is expected to grow by as much as $214 billion in 2019. *(The Washington Post, as it appeared in The Week magazine, November 1, 2019)***

**From 2006 to 2012, roughly 76 billion oxycodone and hydrocodone pills crisscrossed America. What the opioid crisis illustrates is not that there are a few bad apples in the pharmaceutical industry, but that the country's entire health-care system is driven by profit at the expense of public health and safety. Drug manufacturers, pharmacy chains, drug distributors, and insurance companies got rich while people, especially people lower down the income ladder, suffered -- and the Drug Enforcement Administration, through neglect or incompetence or a mix of both, watched it all happen. *(Zachary Siegel, in NewRepublic.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, August 9, 2019)***

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**The opioid epidemic is deadlier for Americans than the Vietnam War was in its worst year. Opioids contributed to the deaths of 1.5 percent of Americans who died in 2016, while 1 percent of Americans who died in 1968 perished in Vietnam. *(WashingtonPost.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 22, 2018)***

**The two deadliest drugs in America are both legal. Tobacco kills more than 500,000 Americans a year. Alcohol is linked to 88,000 deaths a year (including those caused by drunk driving and violent behavior) and more than 4.6 million emergency room visits. *(Vox.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 26, 2015)***

**U.S. drug deaths nationwide hit a new high last year, according to the CDC. An estimated 109,680 Americans died of overdoses in 2022, more than two-thirds of them from fentanyl or other synthetic opioids. *(Associated Press, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 2, 2023)***

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**More Americans now die from misuse of prescription drugs – including anti-depressants, painkillers, and sleeping pills – than from heroin and cocaine, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported. Fatalities due to drug overdoses have been rising dramatically in the U.S. since 1999, largely because of the abuse of prescription drugs. *(Los Angeles Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, February 8, 2008)***

**More than 87,000 Americans died of drug overdoses between September 2019 and September 2020, a 29 percent jump from the previous 12 months and the highest number since the opioid epidemic began in the 1990s. The biggest increase came in April and May, when many treatment programs and support centers closed or cut back services. *(Axios.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, April 30, 2021)***

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**In a recent review of more than 1,440 generic drugs covered under Medicare Part D, the Government Accountability Office found that more than 300 of the drugs doubled in price between 2010 and 2015. *(The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, November 18, 2016)***

**Overheard in a brokerage: “I worry about economists who are so young that they think the Great Depression was ended by Prozac.” *(The American Legion Magazine)***

**Painkiller dulls empathy: Acetaminophen helps dull the pain of some 52 million Americans each week, but new research suggests it could also blunt their sensitivity to other people's distress. Researchers conducted a series of experiments involving 200 college students to assess the effects of acetaminophen -- an active ingredient in Tylenol and more than 600 other medications -- on their ability to empathize. Participants read eight short stories with wrenching scenarios -- one told of a person who suffered a knife wound that cut to the bone; in another, someone grappled with the death of his father. As it turned out, CNN.com reports, the students who took 1,000 mg of acetaminophen (equivalent to two extra-strength Tylenol tablets) displayed less empathy for people who were enduring an emotionally or physically painful experience. "If you are having an argument with your spouse and you just took acetaminophen, this research suggests you might be less understanding of what you did to hurt your spouse's feelings," says study author Baldwin Way. "We don't know why acetaminophen is having these effects," but it is cause for concern. *(The Week magazine, June 3, 2016)***

**A lot of drugs are used by folks who think if you tinker with an empty head you can get it going. *(Frank A. Clark, Register and Tribune Syndicate)***

**Authorities in California seized 62,000 pounds of smuggled fentanyl last year, up from 5,300 pounds in 2021. The 2023 seizures are “enough to potentially kill the global population nearly twice over,” said California Governor Gavin Newsom. *(Los Angeles Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 15, 2024)***

**Fish on drugs: Psychiatric medications passing through sewage treatment plants could be dramatically changing the behavior of fish. After researchers discovered low levels of common anti-anxiety drugs called benzodiazepines in perch living downstream from a treatment plant in southern Sweden, they tested the same concentrations of the drug on fish in the lab. They found that the medicine made the fish lose their inhibitions, causing them to eat more than unexposed fish do and to be less cautious about straying from their schools -- behaviors that, in the wild, could have major ecological consequences. Drug-addled fish with the munchies might reduce populations of zooplankton, which could lead to blooms of the algae that zooplankton consume; bolder fish might also become more vulnerable to predators. researchers say hundreds of different pharmaceutical drugs are likely slipping unchecked into waterways -- and having unknown effects on fish and other vertebrates. "It's scary when you think about it," ecologist Tomas Brodin of Sweden's Umea University tells BBCNews.com. "It's a huge cocktail of drugs, and fish are experiencing it 24/7 -- breathing it, drinking it, and eating in it." *(The Week magazine, March 8, 2013)***

**Pharma: Florida will import cheaper medication: Florida can become the first state to import prescription drugs from Canada at a lower cost, said Christina Jewett and Sheryl Gay Stolberg in The New York Times. In “a major policy shift for the United States,” the Food and Drug Administration this week finally approved the state’s request, nearly four years after it was submitted. “Congress passed a law allowing drug importation two decades ago,” but previous import efforts were stymied by fierce opposition from pharmaceutical industry lobbyists. Florida has estimated that bulk purchases of cheaper drugs “could save up to $150 million in its first year.” *(The Week magazine, January 19, 2024)***

**Drugs are when you fly now and really pay later. *(Orben’s Comedy Fillers)***

**Studies have repeatedly found that the consequences of bingeing on high-calorie, high-fat foods mimic the effects of drug addiction. A recent study by the Scripps Research Institute found that gorging on fast food actually changes the brain’s chemical makeup, making it more difficult to trigger the release of dopamine (aka “the pleasure chemical”). That means fast-food addicts need to eat more and more to feel happy – the same way users of cocaine and other drugs, for example, need to keep upping their dosages to get high. An earlier study, by Princeton University, found that rats who were fed and then withdrawn from a high-fat, high-sugar diet exhibited similar symptoms – chattering teeth and the shakes – to junkies going cold turkey. “Drugs give a bigger effect,” said study author Bart Hoebel, “but it’s essentially the same process.” *(The Week magazine, August 19-26, 2011)***

**U.S. drug makers distributed about $3 billion in free samples to physicians in 2007, according to the first-ever comprehensive survey of the marketing practice. The vast majority of the freebies was handed out by Pfizer, which distributed $2.7 billion in samples. *(The Wall Street Journal, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 18, 2010)***

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**Sixty-nine percent of the drugs dispensed in the United States are generic, but generics only account for 19 percent of prescription spending. *(Don Voorhees, in The Super Book of Useless Information, 2011, p. 55)***

**Teacher: "Who can tell me what a generic drug is? Johnny?" Johnny: "It's for people who want to save money on getting well." *(Johnny Hart, in BC comic strip)***

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**Nearly 17,000 people in six countries – including the U.S. – may have died after being prescribed hydroxychloroquine while hospitalized with Covid during the first wave of the pandemic, according to French researchers. The anti-malaria drug can cause serious heart rhythm problems but was hailed by then-President Donald Trump as a “miracle cure” for Covid, despite a lack of evidence on its clinical benefits*. (Politico, as it appeared in The Week magazine, January 19, 2024)***

**Years ago Dr. Edwin Roberts, senior psychiatrist at Bellevue Hospital, New York City, issued a warning against our increasing dependence on drugs. Quoted in Medical World News, the doctor said: “People have been given the crazy idea that they should live a tension-free life. They are told that there is some kind of pill that will handle any sort of life situation.” *(Bits & Pieces)***

**Every form of addiction is bad, no matter whether the narcotic be alcohol or morphine or idealism. *(Carl Jung)***

**Kids who try drugs: Being smart may make you more likely to take recreational drugs, not less. New research from the U.K. shows that girls between the ages of 5 and 10 who score in the top third on IQ tests are more than twice as likely to try marijuana or cocaine by age 30 as their lower-scoring peers. And boys with impressive test results are almost 60 percent more likely than their classmates to sample multiple illegal drugs as teens and adults. "It's not what we thought we'd find," Cardiff University's James White tells Time.com, since previous studies have shown brainy kids to be more likely to forgo cigarettes and to lead healthy, active lifestyles as adults. But experimenting with narcotics may be especially tempting to smarter kids, who are also more prone to boredom and "more willing to experiment and seek our novel experiences," White says. Another possibility: Intelligent, health-conscious people may believe they're too smart to become addicts, so they feel free to try drugs. *(The Week magazine, December 2, 2011)***

**The median launch price of a new drug in The U.S. soared from $2,115 in 2008 to $180,007 in 2021, with average prices rising 20 percent per year. Over 47 percent of new drugs introduced in 2020 and 2021 cost more than $150,000 per year, compared with just 9 percent of drugs introduced from 2008 to 2013. *(Fortune, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 17, 2022)***

**The median out-of-pocket cost for a prescription drug purchased through Medicare Part D was $117 in 2015, up nearly half from $79 in 2011. There were 220 Part D drugs with annual out-of-pocket costs of $1,000 or more, up from 118 drugs in 2011. *(The Wall Street Street Journal, as it appeared in The Week magazine, June 9, 2017)***

**Miracle drugs go way back. Moses had two tablets that could cure the world's ills. (Shelby Friedman)**

**The U.S. Food and Drug Administration cleared 22 new medicines for sale in 2016, the lowest number since 2010 and a sharp decline from 2015's total of 45 approved drugs. Returns on research and development investment at the top 12 pharmaceutical companies fell to 3.7 percent in 2016, from a high of 10.1 percent in 2010. (Reuters.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, January 13, 2017)**

**Newborn painkiller addicts: Prescription-drug abuse is skyrocketing in the U.S., and more and more pregnant women are passing addiction on to their newborn babies. A new report by University of Michigan researchers shows that the number of infants born addicted to opiates -- especially prescription painkillers like Oxycontin and Vicodin -- tripled between 2000 and 2009 to more than 13,500 per year, or about one birth every hour. In the same period, the number of pregnant women using opiates increased fivefold. The incidence of opiate abuse, and especially of prescription painkillers, "has gone crazy," University of Maine neuroscientist Marie J. Hayes tells The New York Times. Babies born to opiate-addicted mothers are often premature and underweight, and can suffer dangerous and painful withdrawal symptoms, including seizures and difficulty breathing and feeding. They're also at risk of overdosing on the morphine and methadone often needed to wean them from more-dangerous drugs, an expensive process than can mean weeks in neonatal intensive care units. Recent data show that some 16 percent of pregnant teens, and almost 8 percent of pregnant women between the ages of 18 to 25, use illicit drugs. Says study author Stephen Patrick, "This is really a public health emergency." (The Week magazine, May 18, 2012)**

**NyQuil on the rocks, for when you're feeling sick but sociable. (Mitch Hedburg)**

**In 2011, more than 10 blockbuster drugs, whose combined annual sales approach $50 billion, will go off-patent, exposing major pharmaceutical companies to greater competition from generic drugs and wiping out a key revenue source. Analysts at Morgan Stanley recently downgraded its investment ratings on several European pharmaceutical makers, warning that “the operating environment for pharma is worsening rapidly.” *(The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 18, 2011)***

**In the 1800s, Western countries began to interfere with China’s way of life. Britain set up an opium trade with China. Britain went to war to force China to continue trading opium. When China lost the Opium Wars, it was forced to give many privileges to Britain and other Western countries. In 1898, China was forced to lease the port of Hong Kong to Britain for 99 years. *(Betty Debnam, in Rocky Mountain News)***

**Pharmacist says to Ziggy: "And this one is your medication! All these others are to counter its side effects." *(Tom Wilson, in Ziggy comic strip)***

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**Over the past two decades, use of prescription painkillers such as Oxycontin has soared by 1,000 percent, and in 15 states, overdoses of prescription drugs have replaced car crashes as the leading cause of accidental death. *(Time, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 17, 2010)***

**The number of prescriptions for opioid painkillers such as Oxycontin has soared 400 percent in the past decade, leading to growing abuse and addiction. “If doctors understood how hard it is to get patients off of these drugs,” said pain specialist Dr. Jane Ballantyne, “they would not prescribe them to begin with.” *(The New York Times, as it appeared in The Week magazine, April 20, 2012)***

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**Sick Call: During a flu epidemic, one woman was a frequent customer in our drug store, buying cold pills, laxatives, ear drops, nose drops and vaporizers for various members of her family. Finally one day, looking at me wearily through watery eyes, she asked, “Do you have a pill for a family that has everything?” *(Nancy Pratt, in Reader’s Digest)***

**Painkiller dulls pleasure, too: Every week, more than 50 million Americans take acetaminophen, the active ingredient in Tylenol and many other popular painkillers, to ease their aches and pains. But a new study has revealed that the drug also dulls emotions -- including happiness. Prior research showed that acetaminophen can help take the sting out of negative feelings like dread, but the new findings from Ohio State University researchers suggest it may actually blunt all emotional reactions. Scientists studied a group of 82 college students, some of whom received 1,000 milligrams of the painkiller while others were given a placebo. Presented with a series of photographs meant to trigger emotional reactions, subjects who had taken the drug reacted much less extremely to both positive and negative images than those who had taken the placebo. Heartwarming pictures, such as people playing with pets, were less pleasurable, while disturbing photos, like malnourished children, were not as upsetting. Exactly how the drug affects emotions remains unclear, and whether or not other pain relievers, like ibuprofen, have similar psychological effects is still under investigation. "This means that using Tylenol or similar products might have broader consequences than previously thought," the study's lead author, Geoffrey Durso, tell HuffingtonPost.com. "Acetaminophen can be seen as an all-purpose emotion reliever." *(The Week magazine, May 1, 2015)***

**A distraught patient phoned her doctor's office. Was it true, the woman wanted to know, that the medication the doctor had prescribed was for the rest of her life? She was told that it was. There was a moment of silence before the woman continued, "I'm wondering, then, just how serious my condition is. This prescription is marked 'no refills.'" *(Robert Doty, in Reader's Digest)***

**Opioids Actually Prolong Pain: Opioids like morphine, OxyContin, and Vicodin are among the most commonly used -- and abused -- prescription painkillers in the U.S. A new study reveals, however, that these powerful drugs can actually intensify and extend physical suffering. University of Colorado neuroscientists simulated chronic nerve pain in rats by pinching the sciatic nerve in their legs. While one group was given morphine for five days, a control group received no treatment. After assessing the rats' pain threshold, the researchers found the untreated rodents recovered in about five weeks. The morphine-treated rats, on the other hand, remained in pain for up to 12 weeks, Forbes.com reports. Morphine and other opioids seem to reshape the nervous system to amplify pain signals even after the original illness or injury subsides, prolonging and worsening discomfort, researchers said. "We are showing for the first time," says study author Peter Grace, "that even a brief exposure to opioids can have long-term negative effects." *(The Week magazine, June 17, 2016)***

**Reading is socially accepted disassociation. You flip a switch and you're not there anymore. It's better than heroin. (Mary Karr, memoirist)**

**U.S. recalls of prescription and over-the-counter drugs surged last year to 1,742, from 426 in 2008, a sign that drug manufacturing standards may be slipping. One now-defunct company, Advantage Dose, accounted for more than 1,000 of the recalls, but even after stripping out Advantage Dose, recalls are running 50 percent ahead of 2008’s totals. *(CNNmoney.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, August 27, 2010)***

**Even the use of illegal drugs has been affected by the red-blue divide: The top five states with the most methamphetamine lab incidents are all red states. The top five states with the highest cocaine use all are blue states. *(NewRepublic.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, October 25, 2013)***

**Popping so many pills is killing us: What will it take for France to get serious about regulating prescription drugs? asked Sauveur Boukris. We French love to take pills; we are the biggest consumers of medicines in Europe. French doctors “tend to prescribe far more heavily” than their foreign colleagues, dispensing four or five drugs to treat any given malady, while Germans or Dutch doctors prescribe two or three. Perhaps that reflects the influence of our pharmaceutical industry, which relentlessly promotes its new products and seems to have almost total “control over our health authorities.” Whatever the reason, our love of meds is bad for our health. Adverse reactions to prescription drugs cause more than 130,000 hospitalizations a year and kill some 9,000 people – twice as many as die in car accidents. Just this week, another faulty drug was exposed. The Health Ministry says the diabetes drug Mediator, which was used by millions as an appetite suppressant until it was taken off the market last year, may have killed 500 people by damaging their heart valves. Anyone who took it is now urged to get a cardiac checkup. Why wasn’t this disastrous side effect discovered in drug trials? Could it be because “authorities are more concerned about the economic interests of pharmaceutical firms” than about public health? *(The Week magazine, December 24, 2010 – January 7, 2011)***

**A new survey found that it pays to shop around for generic drugs. The price of the equivalent of five blockbuster medications can vary by more than 400 percent at different stores. Generic versions of cholesterol-lowering Lipitor, for instance, range from $17 to $150. *(Consumer Reports, as it appeared in The Week magazine, April 12, 2013)***

**Nobody’s giving the crustaceans a prescription for Prozac, but shrimp consume antidepressants anyway, in the runoff of human waste that feeds into estuaries and other waterways where shrimp congregate. Shrimp don’t get a lift from the drugs, a new study finds; instead, they become reckless, and abandon the darker waters where they are less visible to predators and seek sunny, bright areas instead, which puts them in danger. “This behavior makes them much more likely to be eaten by a predator, such as a fish or bird,” study co-author Alex Ford, a biologist at the University of Portsmouth in England, tells National Geographic.com. Prozac makes the shrimp’s nerves more sensitive to serotonin, a brain chemical known to alter moods and sleep patterns. The chemicals likely affect a range of fish, but the researchers “focused on shrimp because they are common and important in the food chain,” Ford says; endanger the shrimp, and the whole ecosystem stands to suffer. *(The Week magazine, August 6, 2010)***

**U.S. prescription-drug spending hit $374 billion in 2014, up 13 percent from 2013, according to IMS Health. That's the highest annual growth rate since 2001. *(MarketWatch.com, as it appeared in The Week magazine, September 25, 2015)***

**A deadly superbug: A rare, drug-resistant superbug impervious to all 26 antibiotics available in the U.S. has claimed the life of a woman in Nevada. The patient, in her 70s, had been hospitalized with a broken leg in India, where drug-resistant bacteria are more common. She developed an infection in her blood, which turned out to be Klebsiella pneumoniae, a type of gut bacteria from a family of superbugs. Back in the U.S., doctors found that the bacteria were resistant to all available antibiotics, even those usually reserved as a last resort for multidrug-resistant bacteria. Within two months, the woman had died of multiple organ failure and sepsis. Health officials say her death is a grim reminder that drug-resistant bacteria are evolving, and that certain infections could one day become untreatable. “People keep asking me, ‘How close are we to going off the cliff?’” James Johnson, professor of infectious diseases medicine at the University of Minnesota, tells NPR.org. “Come on, people. We’re off the cliff. It’s already happening. People are dying.” *(The Week magazine, February 3, 2017)***

**Drugs have taught an entire generation of American kids the metric system. *(P. J. O’Rourke)***

**There are only two industries that call their customers “users”: illegal drugs and software. *(Edward Tufte, statistician, in the Denver Post)***

**At the salon, I overheard the receptionist admit to another customer, “I haven’t taken my vitamins today. I’m walking around unprotected.” The customer commiserated with her. “I haven’t taken my Prozac today – everyone’s walking around unprotected. *(Debra Hair, in Reader’s Digest)***

**It is now 50 years since the U.S. launched its War on Drugs, said Jose Melendez and Victor Sancho in El Universal (Mexico), a conflict that has achieved little beside corrupting Latin American democracy. The war began on June 17, 1971, when President Richard Nixon -- angry that Vietnam veterans were coming home addicted to heroin, and eager to distract the public from civil rights protests -- declared drug abuse to be "public enemy No. 1." The U.S. has since funneled more than $1 trillion into its drug war, yet last year a record 90,000 Americans died of an overdose. In Latin America, the toll is incalculable. Governments in the region were forced to crack down hard on drug production and trafficking to avoid being hit with U.S. sanctions. But those crackdowns simply drove up drug prices, making the trade vastly more profitable and empowering the cartels. When governments tried to squash them, the gangs began buying off cops, then mayors, then judges, then senators, then presidents. "The war caused a domino effect," as each corrupt politician in turn corrupted another, and now the criminality involves political parties, businessmen, and bankers "in a network of corruption across Latin America." *(The Week magazine, July 2, 2021)***

**Over the last six years, more drugs have been withdrawn from the market or required by the Food and Drug Administration to carry major warnings than have been approved for sale. *(Fortune, as it appeared in The Week magazine, March 3, 2006)***

**Cocaine is God's way of saying that you're making too much money*. (Robin Williams)***

**Women and deadly painkillers: Overdoses of prescription painkillers have become one of the leading causes of death among women. More women now die from overdoses of prescription pills like OxyContin, Vicodin, and Percocet than from cervical cancer homicide, or street drugs such as heroin and cocaine, a new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention shows. "We need to better understand how dangerous these drugs are," CDC Director Thomas Frieden tells CBSNews.com. "These are really troubling numbers." More men die from painkillers overdoses than women do, but the rate of death among women is rising much more rapidly -- soaring 400 percent in a decade. Women are more likely than men to experience chronic pain, and thus to receive painkiller prescriptions at higher doses and over longer periods of time. They're also more likely to take anti-anxiety medications that can be lethal in combination with pain pills. "These are dangerous medications," Frieden said. In many cases, he said, "the risks far outweigh the benefits." *(The Week magazine, July 19, 2013)***

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