

**A numbing trend: Prescription drug abuse on the rise** Apr 9, 2009 By Karen Billing  
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Cyrus Moinzadeh was smart, a "whiz at everything," his mother said. He could speak three languages and had a photographic memory. He was charming and friendly and had beautiful blue eyes.

On Dec. 16, 2007, the 23-year-old Torrey Pines graduate died after overdosing on OxyContin.

"So many dreams buried," his mother Kiyan Yazdani said. "Pointless and senseless." Ask Yazdani about the price of OxyContin abuse and she will tell you she's felt Cyrus' absence through every minute of every hour of the one year and four months since his death.

And she is not alone. Of Cyrus' closest group of five friends from high school, three have died from drug overdoses. The other two are in rehab for Oxy addiction. Eight lives from the Torrey Pines class of 2002 alone have been lost to drugs, Yazdani said.

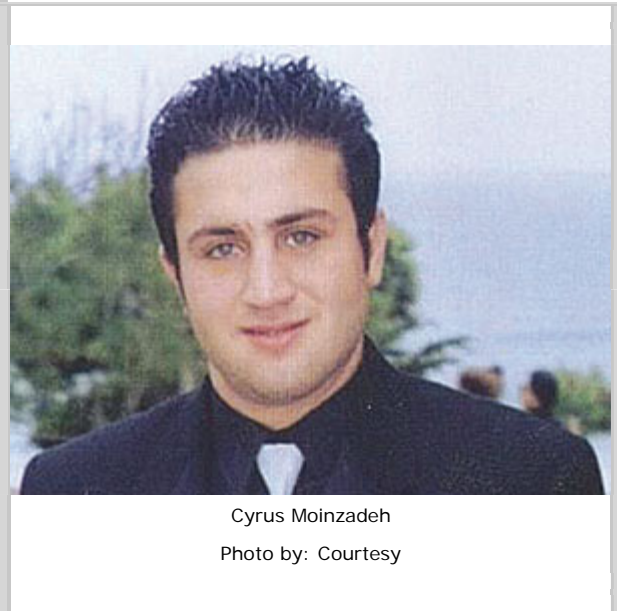
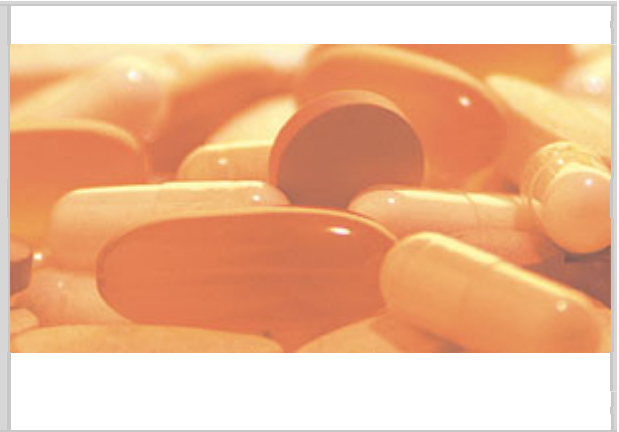
Yazdani said a lot of parents want to close their eyes to it - some who have lost a child to drug addiction will say it was a heart condition or a lung condition because they don't want to talk about the real problem.

But Yazdani does, if it can save just one life. She doesn't want her fraternity of grieving mothers to grow any larger than it already is.

"I don't want any other parents to be where I am," Yazdani said. "They should be taking flowers to their children's weddings, not to their graves everyday like I am."

OxyContin, a formula of the opiate oxycodone, is prescribed for relief associated with severe injuries, bursitis, dislocation, fractures, arthritis, lower back pain and cancer pain.

Overdoses can result in stupor, coma, muscle flaccidity, severe respiratory depression, hypertension and cardiac arrest, according to Glenn Wagner, San Diego County's chief



Cyrus Moinzadeh  
Photo by: Courtesy

medical examiner.

If OxyContin is an epidemic, teenagers in the North County are living in its epicenter, Yazdani said.

Teenagers can type "Get oxycontin without a prescription" into an Internet search engine and find Web sites that will ship the drug from Canada or Mexico. But Yazdani said North County teenagers don't even have to go that far. She said with a phone call, the drug will be delivered that day. Some dealers even offer a "month free" of use.

One pill can run \$60 to \$80, according to Joseph Olesky, the San Dieguito Union School District substance abuse counselor. Taken orally, the capsules are time-released, so to get the high faster, teens crush it up and snort it or melt the pill to smoke it. They place the drug on tin foil, heat it from underneath with a lighter and inhale the fumes with a straw.

Smoking or snorting OxyContin, or Oxy, causes the drug to enter the body very fast, within 10 minutes. The high, similar to that of heroin, can last three to four hours, Olesky said. "Some melt it in a spoon and shoot it up," he added, noting all methods of use are equally dangerous.

Scott Henderson, of the San Diego Police Department narcotics division, spoke about the problem at a community crime forum in February. He advised parents to keep an eye on their teenagers' activities.

Check out their Facebook and MySpace pages, he said, because that's commonly where they exchange information about getting drugs. Henderson also said to be on the lookout for the tin foil used to smoke it since Oxy leaves black charred streaks.

"If you're running out of tin foil and you don't make a lot of casseroles, I'm telling you right now something is amiss," Henderson said.

Parents can also look for changes in their child's behavior, such as a loss of interest in their normal activities and lack of energy. Yazdani said she noticed that Cyrus slept a lot more and that his straight-A grades at San Diego State had slipped substantially. In an attempt to battle his addictions, she sent him to rehab facilities in Mexico and Cuba but he'd only stay for two months.

Yazdani said Cyrus told her he would cry because the pain and cravings were so bad and that he was trying to "be good" but just couldn't.

Yazdani was set to pick Cyrus up at the train station after a trip to Costa Rica on a Sunday in December of 2007. He had promised she could take him to any rehab she

liked when he came in from Los Angeles.

Instead, Cyrus died alone in a hotel room after a drug dealer left him with a bottle full of pills.

Yazdani said she wants more people to talk about OxyContin and more teens to realize that they are not invincible, that they can die from this and that they should be afraid of using this drug. "There's got to be more awareness," Yazdani said. "We have to show kids what can happen."

Cyrus left behind a younger brother Dariush. Yazdani said Dariush shies away from taking any kind of medicine - even cough medicine.

He's learned his lesson, Yazdani said, but at what cost?

## **Facts about OxyContin**

### **What it is:**

An opiate prescribed for pain relief

How teens use it: Oxy can be taken as a pill, crushed up and snorted, melted and smoked or injected. Smoking is the most common method

### **Slang terms:**

OC, Ox, 80's, Beans, Norcos, Watsons

What to look for: Paraphernalia consisting of aluminum foil, lighters, straws, syringes and spoons burnt on one side

Editor's note: Part two in this series, which will run in an upcoming edition, will further examine OxyContin addiction and explore the recovery process.

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