

## Opium, heroin Subutex – ett globalt reportage (= a global report)

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This report book is written and published in Swedish. Here is a short description in English:

The report starts in Afghanistan 2006. I travel around in the country and talk to opium farmers, police bosses, politicians, drug addicts, treatment centers, UN civil servants etc. I also meet the Senlis council, a NGO with an idea that opium cultivation should be legal. I do not think that is a good idea.

Next chapter is the history of heroin, which of course starts with opium. One conclusion is that it has not been worse all the time. Hundred years ago there were maybe 30 millions of opiate addicts in the whole world. The total population at that time was 3 milliards. Today we are 9 milliards and 16 million heroin of opium addicts. That shows that it's possible to combat drugs.

The UN conventions about narcotic drugs are important.

Chapter 3 is about Scotland. Perhaps the most infected European country of the heroin epidemic.

The professor Neil McKeganey is very critical against the harm reduction policy in UK. His studies shows that the British drug policy is a failure.

My visit at the Glasgow Association of Family Support groups shows the agony and despair of the parents and relatives of drug addicts. Their only choice for treatment is methadone. There is only 200 places in residential drug treatment for the 50 000 Scottish heroin addicts.

Chapter 4 is a trip to Switzerland. I visit several heroin prescription units. A great success to help the heroin addicts according to the Swiss authorities. I doubt that and by reading their own reports and studies I can show that these patients are consuming more narcotic drugs in the heroin programmes that they ever could use in the street market. The side consume in the programmes of alcohol, cannabis, benzodiazepines is very high although the high doses of legal heroin. The death rates among the patients doesn't seem to decrease.

Chapter 5 is about Sweden and a little bit about Finland. Sweden has one of the lowest number of heroin addicts pro capita in Europe. There is a debate in my home country about Subutex (bupreorphine) which was introduced in the legal marked 1999. We have



today, partly due to the doctors prescription of the new substitute drug, a big illegal Subutex market. In Finland Subutex has almost totally destroyed the heroin market, but that has not made the whole drug problem better. Today more Finnish drug addicts dies of Subutex related overdoses than they ever died of heroin when that was the main opiate drug. It's true that Subutex is less toxic than heroin, but in street practice the Subutex is always used together with other drugs or alcohol. This mixture is fatal.

Last chapter is my meetings with Christer, a male drug addict in Stockholm. Christer has an interesting story to tell. He doesn't use heroin anymore, but he still smoke cannabis and drink a lot of beer. His life story is rather typical. He has survived and he has decreased his drug abuse, but life is still a mess with criminality and homelessness.