Heroin overdose deaths in U.S. tripled in 3 years

By John Tozzi, BloombergBusiness

More than 8,200 Americans — an average of 23 people each day — died of heroin overdoses in 2013. That's according to a report from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), and it's the latest evidence that the nation's heroin problem is becoming more severe.

The rate of overdose deaths in 2013, the CDC report states, is almost triple what it was in 2010.

The growing heroin problem follows a decadelong increase in the abuse of prescription opioids such as oxycodone and fentanyl, which are chemically similar to heroin. Many more Americans continue to die from overdoses involving these kinds of prescription pills than heroin.

But opioid-related deaths have declined slightly, while the rate of heroin deaths has increased since 2010. That was the year the OxyContin, a widely prescribed painkiller, was reformulated to make it harder to abuse.

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