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Unjust Arrests:
How Medical Conditions Are Mistaken for Drug Use, Leaving Vulnerable People at Risk

By Dale Jodoin

Across North America, there is an unsettling trend that's putting innocent people in harm's way. Imagine experiencing a medical emergency — maybe it's a sudden diabetic episode or a panic attack — only to be mistaken for a drug user, handcuffed, and thrown in jail instead of receiving the medical help you need. This is the reality for many individuals with serious medical conditions that, unfortunately, can mimic the signs of drug use. These people, already vulnerable, are now facing stigma, legal troubles, and even life-threatening consequences because of a system that lacks understanding and compassion.

Medical Conditions That Look Like Drug Use

Certain health conditions cause symptoms that can appear similar to intoxication or drug use. Here are some examples:

Diabetes (Hypoglycemia): When blood sugar levels drop too low, a person can become confused, dizzy, and unsteady on their feet, much like someone who is drunk or high. They might slur their speech, sweat profusely, or even pass out. Despite this, people in this state have been mistaken for drug users and denied the immediate care they need.

Epilepsy: People with epilepsy sometimes experience seizures that can make them appear "out of it" or cause sudden behavioral changes. In public settings, they might be seen as "acting strange," leading law enforcement to jump to conclusions.

Mental Health Conditions (e.g., Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia): Those suffering from severe mental health conditions can exhibit behavior that may be misinterpreted. They may talk quickly, become aggressive, or seem disoriented, and officers who lack training might assume they are on drugs.

Panic and Anxiety Disorders: Panic attacks can cause people to feel overwhelmed, dizzy, short of breath, and fearful. They might tremble or struggle to respond coherently, which some may mistake for drug use.

These examples are just a few of the many medical issues that can be misunderstood, resulting in life-altering consequences for those affected. When individuals in crisis are misjudged, they're often handcuffed, put in holding cells, or dismissed as "just another drug user." In reality, they're people in desperate need of help — help that's often delayed or denied because of this misinterpretation.

Arrested Instead of Treated

The consequences of these misunderstandings are severe. Instead of getting timely medical care, many individuals end up in custody. The physical and emotional toll of these situations is enormous. Imagine being taken to jail when you're already in distress and unable to explain yourself. Not only does this deny people medical attention, but it also stigmatizes them, casting them as criminals simply because their medical crisis was misunderstood. Furthermore, being labeled as a drug user can have lasting effects. It affects relationships, employment, and social standing, leaving people feeling isolated and shamed over something they had no control over.

Why This Keeps Happening

Law enforcement officers often have to make quick decisions in high-stress situations. However, without medical training, it's easy to mistake the symptoms of a medical condition for the effects of drug use. Police departments are increasingly facing calls to provide more comprehensive training so that officers can better recognize the signs of medical issues. Despite some progress, many officers still lack the resources or training to accurately distinguish between a medical emergency and drug impairment. As a result, people with legitimate medical needs are being wrongly accused and even put at risk of death when they don't receive timely help.

Real-Life Stories of Misunderstood Illnesses

In one well-known case, a man suffering from a diabetic episode was driving when his blood sugar dropped. He started to act erratically, and when police arrived, they assumed he was under the influence of drugs. Instead of checking his medical condition, they arrested him. By the time his family could intervene, he was in critical condition due to delayed treatment. Another case involved a woman experiencing a panic attack in a store. She became visibly distressed, breathing heavily and clutching her chest. The police were called, but instead of offering assistance, they assumed she was on drugs and detained her. This traumatic experience not only left her shaken but also reinforced the stigma that anyone exhibiting unusual behavior must be on drugs. These stories are not isolated incidents. They happen far too often, highlighting a need for change in how we respond to people in distress.

PIC

FREE FEATURE

TITLE

PROUDLY SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESSES LIKE ...

VOLUNTEERS PLANT 600 TREES IN UXBRIDGE'S FIRST MINI-FOREST

The Township of Uxbridge has announced the successful planting of the first Mini-Forest in Durham Region.

On Saturday, November 2, over 80 volunteers came together to plant 600 native trees and shrubs at the Fields of Uxbridge.

The Mini-Forest initiative aims to create small, dense forests that mimic the structure and function of natural forests. By planting a variety of native species, these forests can help to improve air quality, reduce stormwater runoff, and provide habitat for wildlife, said a township statement.

The project was a collaborative effort between the Rotary Club of Uxbridge, Little Forests Durham, and the Township of Uxbridge. Funding was provided by Green Communities Canada, the Greenbelt Foundation, and the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority.

Volunteers of all ages, including members of the 11U Uxbridge Grizzlies baseball team, The Rotary Club of Uxbridge, Little Forests Durham, Uxbridge Trails volunteers, and the Uxbridge 1st Scouts, contributed to the planting effort.

In the Spring of 2025, volunteers will return to maintain the mini-forest with mulching and weeding efforts. Plans are already underway for a second Mini-Forest to be planted adjacent to the current site, further enhancing the area's biodiversity.

STAY FIT THIS WINTER WITH UXBRIDGE INDOOR WALKING TRAIL

The Township of Uxbridge says with the winter months approaching, many residents look forward to staying active while at the same time staying warm.

It is offering an indoor walking trail at Uxbridge Secondary School on Monday and Wednesday evenings to provide a safe and accessible fitness opportunity throughout the winter season. Strollers and mobility devices are welcome.

The walking trail opened yesterday (November 4), and can be accessed between 6pm-8pm on Mondays and Wednesdays except for holidays and school closures. Participants can pay each time they go for a \$5 drop-in fee (cash only) or purchase a membership for \$40.

TAKE THE THREE SECOND TEST!!!

- Turn to any page in this newspaper. Look at any ad for the count of three. Then turn page. Tell me what you remember of that ad or page? Can you recall product? Can you recall phone number? Can you recall what was advertised? Can you recall address? Can you recall company name? Can you recall any pictures? Can you recall any logos?

If little or nothing. You just proven why **BUS ADVERTISING, BILL BOARDS, ELECTRONIC ROAD SIDE SIGNS** do not work.

WHY: - Normally when people are driving they are constantly looking around for all kind of safety reasons. Three seconds tends to be the rule for determining decision making. When looking at a bus. People look for safety first then what is actually on the bus. This compounded with the fragmented artwork due to windows and doors. The average person does not truly see the ad. They notice a bus in motion and maybe the color. Not the messages on it. Much like when you turned the page. You could retain some minute detail but not the whole message.

On a billboard. The key to advertising is simplicity. More than two points. The readers will not be able to retain any information. Therefore the sign will be rendered useless.

Electronic road side signs - Same principle. The high color and light affect in many cases even though appealing. It is also very confusing for the mind to retain any information. Priority is the wow factor of the brightness, (one second). Then word recognition (two seconds). Finally, understanding of what the eye has just witnessed.

These form of advertising do not generally work and can be very costly. The key or purpose for these forms of media to have an impact. It relies on respecting the three second rule.

What this means is that the message has to be contained and clear as for bus advertising. Many try to put too much in a bus that has windows and moving doors. This making the ads look like a badly composed ransom note.

For Electronic road side signs and signs in general. Most advertisers again do not respect the three second rule.

Drivers, walkers do not sit there and read signs. They glance and move on. If a service or product is needed. It is highly speculated that they will not have a pen and paper ready to take down the advertisers information.

Online advertising/social media. Online/social media advertisement operates on a three click rule. If your viewer fails to go to the particular interest in three clicks. Viewer will just move on and or 'x' it off. Look at the number of 'Likes'.

Then what is the answer? Newsprint advertising has gone through some major transformations in the past 15 years. Those, that failed to adjust have fallen, declared bankruptcy. The bottom line is that newsprint advertising has decades of proven success.

WHY: People like to have information in their hands. Easy access and simple. Anyone can turn a page. Not everyone can find an online site and or afford internet.

Information in news print is reliable and comes from a source known in the community.

Social media has become nothing short of a public toilet. Everyone uses and abuses it. From entities pretending to be reputable companies to the many fraudsters.

Online information has become unreliable and manipulative as it plays on people's weaknesses.

There is no value in no cost. With news print. You pay for a subscription to be assured to have reliable information.

Advertisers, they get what they pay for. **VALUE.** As newsprint may change but never go away.

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