

Clients are not stereotypical image of junkies, says Dias

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Clients who come to the Horizons clinics are not the stereotypical image of junkies, he said.

"It's completely ordinary people who unfortunately got hooked on it (opioids) because they were trying to treat pain," said Dias.

He said typically it's someone who was hurt or had surgery and started taking painkillers to deal with the pain. They build up a tolerance

and end up taking more and more of the drugs eventually becoming addicted. Dias estimates that between 90 and 95 per cent of clients seen at their clinics have become addicted this way.

Methadone also helps people addicted to heroin, but Dias said heroin is not a big problem in Ontario.

"Prescription drug use is a big problem," he said.

On average, Dias said clients are on methadone for



BETTY LOU KRISTY

about two years and it is "the most successful intervention available."

"In terms of getting them out of the criminal element and helping them (clients) to integrate better socially and keeping families together it tends to work very well," said Dias.

But he added, "some patients are unable to stick to the program because of cost, or transportation in terms of getting to the pharmacy every

day or getting to see their doctor."

Local resident Betty Lou Kristy, whose son Pete died of an accidental opioid overdose, and who has for years been calling for change and raising awareness of the devastating impacts of opioids, said the methadone clinic "is really important for our community."

"This particular one has done all the right things," said Kristy.

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