

JK

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I was in a serious car accident 11 years ago when a driver ran a 4-way stop and T-boned me. I didn't have any life-threatening injuries and was discharged from the emergency department after imaging and a checkup. I was prescribed Percocet for neck and back pain. The prescription was for 14 days, and I remember being told that my pain should improve within that time frame.

My pain didn't get better. I used up the entire prescription in just a few days. My family doctor advised physiotherapy and prescribed more Percocet, and suggested counselling and a psychiatric assessment because of the anxiety I now had around driving.

I thought this was a rough patch and I would get through it. But it became a vicious cycle. I found it extremely hard to get through the day without taking Percocet. I would go to walk-in clinics in neighbouring towns to get the extra doses I needed. It seemed easier on everyone (doctors and myself) to get a prescription for pain meds than to try to understand why my pain was so terrible.

I'm from a smaller town in Ontario, but there were several people from whom I could buy Percocet. It cost me about 7 bucks a pill. I have 3 kids. I cleaned out our bank account to the point I could not afford diapers. It took all my energy and time to hide my Percocet use from my family.

The worst day of my life is one I can barely remember. I passed out and missed picking up my daughters from school. Our neighbour found me unconscious on the floor of my house. I woke up in our small-town emergency department where I was treated for an overdose.



The stop sign where JK had her accident.

I started methadone while I was in the hospital. I had no idea we had a methadone clinic in my town until I was referred there. The people at our clinic are incredible — they pulled me out of my deep dark hole 1 visit at a time. They think about us when we are not around. They love what they do. It was nice to know I was not alone even though I had alienated myself from everyone. I am thankfully in a better place now, several years later. I think my husband has finally forgiven me.

Last year I slipped on ice and broke my foot. Being in a hospital brought back intense feelings of guilt and shame from my overdose. Providers were reluctant to give me anything to treat my pain overnight. I realize I will probably carry the label of “opioid addict” in health care spaces for the rest of my life.

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