

# Recovery NOW, Inc.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## PILL ADDICTION

SOUTH BAY PSYCHOTHERAPIST WITH A PERSONAL STAKE OFFERS A UNIQUE  
AND MUCH-NEEDED FORUM IN THE SOUTH BAY

ADDRESSING THE LEADING CAUSE OF OVERDOSE: PILL ADDICTION

HERMOSA BEACH, February 14, 2012 –

Heath Ledger. Michael Jackson. Brittany Murphy. Anna Nicole Smith. Most people are familiar with these tragic stories. The stories people don't hear about are the ones that nobody wants to talk about: South Bay teens hosting pill ("Pharm") parties with pills from their parents' medicine cabinets and flirting with death, parents high on drugs prescribed by their doctors caring for their kids, mothers and fathers overdosing leaving behind young families, successful professionals with promising careers on the verge of unemployment as a result of pill addiction. These stories are real. These stories are happening. These stories are now.

There was a time when most overdoses were the result of illegal narcotics. Times have changed. Prescription drugs such as opiates (vicodin, oxycontin and others), "benzos" (ativan, xanax and others), sedatives (ambien, soma and others), and amphetamines (aderall, ritalin and others) are on the rise. The economics of the problem are simple: demand is up and so is the street value of prescription drugs. Unlike street drugs, this is an addiction that can begin with a doctor's prescription and escalate into something more insidious. Pill overdoses are now the leading cause of fatal overdose and the carnage is not just in the big cities; it's in suburban neighborhoods, just like ours. According to the Drug Enforcement Agency, more Americans abuse prescription drugs than cocaine, heroin and ecstasy combined. While we may gossip about the fatal overdoses of celebrities, nobody is talking about what's happening right here. Based on the rising statistics, you would expect a surge of pill support groups. After all, shame and secrecy fuel addictions like these. The opposite is true. Support groups for pill addiction are few and far between.

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Alicia MacGowan, LCSW, LAADC Founder and Clinical Director of Recovery NOW, Inc. has been in the mental health profession for twenty years and has specialized in the treatment of substance abuse and mental illness. In the last five years, MacGowan saw two of her close personal friends lose their families, friends, dignity, and careers in the wreckage of their addiction to prescription pills. Both of these friends died of drug overdoses. MacGowan committed herself to reaching out to those struggling with pill addiction. Her agency has been providing Psychotherapy, Recovery Coaching, Group Therapy & EMDR to assist those in need of treatment for substance abuse.

Both of MacGowan's friends who died of drug overdoses were being treated by Mental Health Professionals who were not trained Substance Abuse Professionals. Individuals seek help but neglect to ask critical questions regarding their Therapist's credentials and/or training in substance abuse. In addition to her own Psychotherapy practice, she trains Mental Health Professional Interns on the treatment of substance abuse. She encourages those reaching out for help with substance abuse issues to look for acronyms such as CADAC or LAADC, which indicate an individual is certified by the California Certification Board of Alcohol and Drug Counselors or RAS, MAC which indicate that they are certified by other Drug and Alcohol Certification Boards or verify the Therapist's substance abuse experience by asking about credentials and/or training. It is not enough to reach out for help. It is the imperative of the individual seeking therapy to make sure the Therapist providing the help has the qualifications in order to make sure their needs specific to substance abuse are addressed.

Having seen the shortcomings of ordinary mental health treatment we decided to develop a comprehensive treatment approach to the problems of pill addiction and substance abuse which includes: Pills Support Group, Relapse Prevention Group Therapy, Psychotherapy Recovery Coaching and EMDR. Individuals do not have to participate in all of these services, but these are the recommended matrix of services we are proposing to assist with the problem. We are offering both groups on the same day in order to make it easy for people to participate in both groups if they choose to do so. The Pills Support Group and Relapse Prevention Group Therapy at Recovery NOW, Inc. will be offering a much needed resources for both those individuals struggling to recognize their problem and individuals struggling to find healthy ways of managing it. Some individuals may need to find a balance with medications that are medically necessary. For those individuals, the key is learning to use rather than abuse. Others may be addicted to pills that are not medically necessary, and for those individuals, abstinence from pills is critical. Identifying alternative ways to manage stress and/or pain is part of the process of recovery. The issues involved in pill addiction are unique and complicated. This is one of the few treatment approaches offered to specifically address them.

“There's not enough education on what pill addiction really is,” says MacGowan. Pill addiction can be difficult to identify and treat. Often times it begins with a prescription offered by a trusted doctor for anxiety, sleep or pain and for the majority of people will not evolve into addiction. An addiction often emerges when tolerance develops and/or an individual faces stressors leading them to seek escape. A strong indication of a pill addiction is when medications interfere with relationships with loved ones. Family members, friends, or employers may notice or complain that they are too sedated or not fully present. Individuals may question whether their use of pills has crossed the line into addiction.

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Pill addiction takes many shapes and forms. The 18 year-old athlete prescribed pain meds while learning that he can no longer play his favorite sport resorts to the streets for pills and/or heroin once the doctor decides pain medications are no longer indicated. The esteemed bank president who uses valium and ativan to calm her nerves accidentally overdoses and never wakes up. The longshoreman injured at the docks finds that his prescription pain pills are no longer enough to address his pain and seeks drugs on the streets while struggling to show up for work. The housewife overwhelmed and exhausted by her responsibilities to her children begins using more and more xanax and vicodin to get through the day until she and her children land in the ER after a car accident due to her intoxication. People mistakenly believe that pill addiction looks a certain way and fail to see that their pill addiction may actually look quite different.

James Morrow, R.A.S., has decades of experience working with individuals, families, and groups. He has managed chemical dependency treatment centers. He has also achieved over 20 years clean and sober himself. He's someone who has been in the trenches and he understands the process of recovery and benefits of group therapy. "Group therapy is effective because the best learning occurs with teachers who understand their students. In group therapy we are all teachers and we are all students." Mr. Morrow will facilitate the Pills Support Group, Relapse Prevention Group Therapy and provide Recovery Coaching and Counseling at Recovery NOW, Inc.

Our goal is to remove the shame and secrecy of this addiction. Group therapy is effective because people realize there are other people struggling just like them. Hopefully if people know where to go to get help, they will start taking back their lives from this life threatening addiction. Families will also have an opportunity to once again enjoy their loved ones which they may have feared they lost to addiction. If you or a family member are struggling with Pill Addiction or other Substance Abuse, We Are Here to Help and answer any questions you may have. We also accept most insurance which makes treatment very affordable for everyone. Please phone Alicia MacGowan at (310) 508-9531 or visit our website [RecoveryNowLA.com](http://RecoveryNowLA.com) for more specific details on these services, resources and other services we offer.

## **Resources offered through Recovery NOW, Inc:**

### **The Pills Support Group San Pedro**

1403 8<sup>th</sup> Street, San Pedro

Weekly on Mondays 8:00 to 9:00 p.m

No fee a free community service. Donations requested.

Seating limited RSVP PillsSP@gmail.com or (310) 508-9531

### **The Pills Support Group Hermosa Beach**

2200 PCH, Suite 303, Hermosa Beach

Weekly on Thursdays 8:00 to 9:00 p.m.

No Fee a free community service. Donations requested.

Seating limited RSVP PillsHB@gmail.com or (310) 508-9531

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## **Relapse Prevention Group Therapy**

2200 PCH, Suite 303

Thursdays from 6:30-8:00pm

This Relapse Prevention Group runs 12 weeks. The cost is \$30/group.

Those interested should call (310) 508-9531 or email [RecoveryNowam@gmail.com](mailto:RecoveryNowam@gmail.com)

## **Additional Resources:**

Pills Anonymous

Our local PA meeting

Beach Cities Christian Fellowship Church

730 11<sup>th</sup> Street

Hermosa Beach

Wednesday evenings 7:00 to 8:00

Women Only/Participation/Open Meeting

## **About Recovery NOW, Inc.**

With offices throughout the South Bay, Recovery NOW, Inc. provides comprehensive services to address the unique needs of individuals struggling with mental health and substance abuse issues.

Services offered include Psychotherapy, Recovery Coaching, EMDR, Hypnotherapy, Support Groups/Group Therapy, Interventions, Professional Training and Consultation, and Aftercare for Those Discharging from Alcohol/Drug Rehabilitation Centers or Psychiatric Hospitals.

We Accept Most Insurances

For additional information regarding the services we provide, please visit [www.recoverynowla.com](http://www.recoverynowla.com) or call (310) 508-9531