



One Hundred Years of Heroin:

David Musto, David F. Musto

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In 1898 Heroin, the Bayer trademark name for diacetylmorphine, was commercially introduced to every corner of the Earth. Contrary to common assertion, Heroin was not recommended for treatment of morphine or opium habits. Rather, Heroin filled a desperate need for a powerful cough suppressant. The leading causes of death at that time, tuberculosis and pneumonia, were linked to uncontrollable coughing. Heroin performed well in preliminary testing by the manufacturer and upon release was hailed for its effectiveness.

Although Heroin is a morphine derivative, for several years it was thought not to be particularly habit forming. Its addictive potential became apparent especially in the United States, where its sale was pretty much unrestricted until 1914. Heroin's prominent use among teen-aged gangs in New York City prompted the city's health commissioner in 1919 to characterize that use as an American disease.

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