

Drugs -

Without Methadone Some Would Return To Heroin

By TOM HONIG
Sentinel Staff Writer

"If it weren't for the methadone program, a lot of us would be in big trouble. We appreciate the reality that the program has given us. If it were stopped, some of us would move to a county that has a program, the rest would go back to heroin."

Tommi Dixon was a heroin

addict for 17 years. During that time she was arrested, hospitalized "and went through nearly every clinic in the world. I was even busted when I was eight months pregnant. I know that if I was taken off methadone I'd go right back to heroin."

The county methadone program has been under attack following the methadone

overdose death of Anne Frear, a 17-year old Aptos High School student. Critics have charged that security leaks in the program supply a black market of the drug on the street, and overdoses from the drug are an increasing problem.

Mrs. Dixon said that a black market of methadone existed long before the county program

started. "People from San Jose have been selling it on the street here for a long time. From what I see, controls and security at the clinic couldn't be better." Though Mrs. Dixon "felt sorry" about Miss Frear's death, she added, "just because someone is killed on the freeway, you don't abolish all automobiles and close all the liquor stores." Some patients in

the program reach the point where they are allowed to take their dosages home with them, Mrs. Dixon said. She explained that a patient proceeds to "take home" status by steps. First, a patient must take all his methadone at the clinic. Later, if he remains "clean," (free from heroin) he can take weekend dosages home. Finally, after six months of

being "clean," he has reached the final "take - home" step. Patients at the clinic are checked for heroin by urine analysis. Though some critics have charged that such a test is rare, Mrs. Dixon said that she has been checked on the average of once a week.

A charge that methadone patients are unsafe drivers is "totally absurd," according to

Mrs. Dixon. "The only effect from methadone is that an ex-addict doesn't get sick."

Mrs. Dixon also "resented" the charge that the program is made up of "dopers giving dope to other dopers. What you have is registered nurses giving medication to ex-addicts. I don't consider being on methadone as being a dope -

(Continued on Page 2)

Weather

MONTEREY BAY AREA — Mostly cloudy Sunday morning with a chance of light rain or snow. Clearing Sunday afternoon then fair through Monday. Continued cold. Lows Sunday night from mid 20s to low 30s. Highs Sunday and Monday from mid 30s to low 40s. Light wind.

Temperatures for 24 - hour period ending at 8 a.m. Saturday: High 41, Low 31; for period ending at 5 p.m. Saturday: High 46, Low 23.

Santa Cruz Sentinel

117th Year No. 290 SUNDAY MORNING, DECEMBER 10, 1972

56 Pages

Westwood Quits; Demos Pick Strauss

Some Would Return

(Continued from Page 1)

fiend. I think of myself exactly as someone who must take insulin."

Mrs. Dixon cited other differences between heroin and methadone. "At present I can hold a job, drive and lead a normal life. Methadone costs about \$2 a week, compared with a \$100 a day heroin habit. Such a difference has to result in a decrease in crime."

She added that her present life style is "totally different" since she started methadone treatments. "On heroin, the height of your ambition is to buy enough dope to stay well. Now I want what others want: a car, a home and a family. I'm not eligible to adopt a child, but now, between my husband and me, our income has gone up enough to sponsor a foster child overseas." Mrs. Dixon said that her own son died at the age of five.

"I've prayed and I've done everything to kick heroin. For hard-core addicts, the methadone program is the only answer — it's not something for someone who has just dabbled in drugs. It's a definite last resort."

"I lived in hell for 17 years — now I live in Santa Cruz."

Blind Man