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## **HEATH LEDGER'S DEATH SHINES SPOTLIGHT ON PRESCRIPTION DRUG DANGERS**

### **No One, Not Even Young Hollywood, Immune To Newest Epidemic**

(LAKE WORTH, FLORIDA, 2008) As Hollywood mourns one of its most promising young stars, the harsh reality of prescription medication abuse once again tops headlines and conversation. Though Heath Ledger's death was ruled an accidental overdose, indeed, the topic of prescription drug abuse is again on our minds. Though many wouldn't consider themselves dependent on their prescriptions, the death of the twenty-eight year old actor prompts many to ask, "what and how much am I taking?" Further, it forces those that have not yet sought help for their dependency to reevaluate just how lethal prescription drug abuse can be.

How widespread the epidemic really is is echoed in a recent television public service announcement geared toward parents: a seedy man in a trench coat unsuccessfully looks for a buyer on a street corner. The message: your child no longer needs to find the dealer on the corner to get high – the lethal cocktails are found right in our own medicine cabinets and the repercussions of abusing and mixing them are horrifying.

Sunrise Detox has spent years treating patients who abuse prescription medication and reminds us that users come in many forms. Some seek the drugs for recreational use; others try to mask untreated emotional issues. Most often than not, abusers are those who legitimately seek relief from debilitating pain from injury, accident or disease, and can no longer control their use. Their bodies form a legitimate dependence on their painkillers and, in turn, they enter into a cycle of pain, pills and powerlessness. The ease of finding the drugs and the non-taboo manner of bypassing a "drug dealer" lead many to believe that they are doing nothing wrong.

Prescription medications are second only to marijuana as the most abused drug in the United States, and the abuse is most prevalent in teenagers and young adults. Prescription drugs are abused within all walks of life, social and economic backgrounds. They are not the spoils of privileged Hollywood, rather they have become abundant and can be passed among family and friends without understanding the consequences.

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Sunrise Detox is not only dedicated to treating this growing problem in the United States but also to get the word out to those who may not even be aware of the newest drug abuse trends. Medical Director and addiction specialist, Morgan Poncy, is available to shed light on the dangers of pain pill abuse and what we can learn from Mr. Ledger's untimely death. Dr. Poncy is a board certified internal medicine physician who specializes in the fields of addictions, especially acute detoxification from drugs and alcohol. During the past four years he has treated over 3000 patients in acute withdrawal from opiates, benzodiazepines and alcohol. Sunrise Detox is an acute inpatient detox facility licensed by the Department of Children and Families and is JCAHO accredited.

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