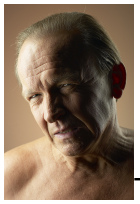
Another Star’s Untimely Death. Alcohol and Heroin Make a Deadly Combination

 The British Columbia Coroners Service announced recently that the cause of death for "Glee" actor Cory Monteith was a case of "mixed drug toxicity, involving heroin and alcohol."

Monteith was found dead in his hotel room in downtown Vancouver, British Columbia, on Saturday, July 13. He had a previous history of addiction, and had been in rehab several times.

The combination of heroin and alcohol that killed the "Glee" actor is especially dangerous, experts say, because alcohol can exaggerate heroin's effect on the central nervous system.

Heroin, a highly addictive opioid drug, is considered a depressant because of its effects sedating the central nervous system. Alcohol also functions as a depressant. Drugs that depress the central nervous system slow the heartbeat, or in large enough doses, can stop it from beating entirely. Without oxygen-rich blood pumping to the body, brain cells become depleted and can die within minutes.

Fact is that the heroin high is characterized by the depression of the central nervous system. In an overdose, breathing stops. Because alcohol is also a Central Nervous System (CNS) depressant, it is dangerous to drink alcohol while using heroin as the compounded effect of CNS depressant can potentiate a heroin overdose.

The Betty Ford Center recently noted that the disease of addiction affects those in all walks of life. For a variety of reasons, celebrities may be entitled, enabled and protected by family, friends, coworkers and colleagues. They may represent a livelihood for many, and everything possible is done to assure that revenue is being generated. Sadly, 'everything' may include looking the other way when substances are abused as well as actually providing drugs or alcohol to sustain abuse, thus leading to dependence.

The Center further notes that "The parts of the brain that activate addiction are stimulated; dopamine is released, and the addict no longer has any choice but to continue using. It's important to note here that by the time the addict has reached this stage, the substance being abused no

longer matters. The alcohol-abuser may turn to heroin.

Drug and alcohol abuse are dangerous enough on their own. When combined, they can be deadly for the user. We can only hope that the story of Monteith (or that of Heath Ledger, Michael Jackson and Anna Nicole Smith) will finally bring an end to, or the decline, in substance abuse and the combination of substances by individuals, especially our youth.

Click here to learn more about alcohol and alcoholism.