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OXYCONTIN

DEBBIE COOPER (Anchor): There have been many news stories lately about deaths and robberies caused by the abuse of the prescription painkiller OxyContin. In fact there has been so much trouble about OxyContin that people who use the drug legitimately are worried for their safety. Deanne Fleet reports.

DEANNE FLEET (Reporter): He was a ship's officer, only 35, when an on the job accident ended his career. Now three years and one back surgery later, he says he lives in chronic pain.

CHRONIC PAIN SUFFERER: The pain's just unbearable sometimes. Without the drug I dread to think how bad it would be.

FLEET: The drug that gives him relief is OxyContin.

CHRONIC PAIN SUFFERER: I started off taking Nabusol 30s (?), they were like eating candy. It was basically the same as Anacin and Tylenol I guess. So then the doctor moved me up to OxyContin.

FLEET: And what kind of difference did it make?

CHRONIC PAIN SUFFERER: A big difference; I was able to do for myself for one thing. I was able to get around a bit better. I wasn't spending as much time in the bed as I was before. Like I said, I lead a bit of a normal life if you call it normal.

FLEET: But here's the catch. He's afraid to tell people he's on the drug.

CHRONIC PAIN SUFFERER: You hear stories on the news and stuff, doctors being threatened and people breaking into pharmacies and stuff, so I certainly wouldn't want anybody to know that I've got it.

FLEET: And it's not just that.

CHRONIC PAIN SUFFERER: You tell somebody you're on OxyContin and the first thing that comes to their mind is the addiction and the abuse of the drug, and right away you are labelled as somebody who could be abusing it. My family doctor said it was a long term thing, but he said, who knows, he said in five or ten years time you might get better enough that you may be able to come off of it. When the time comes, he said, they wean you off the drug; they reduce it gradually over a period of time.

FLEET: Two pills a day, one at morning, one at night. Like many others, he says OxyContin gives him relief and a bit of a life. So as reports continue about OxyContin abuse and crime, he wants people to remember there are other users out there just like him.

Deanne Fleet, CBC News.