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Coping With Stress Subject of New NIDA Community Alert

Bulletin
Vol. 17, No. 1

NIDA's latest Community Alert Bulletin, "[Stress and Substance Abuse](#)," addresses a problem that has become acute and widespread since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Exposure to stress, felt by millions since the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks, is a powerful trigger for drug use, as well as for relapse by former abusers who have achieved abstinence.



Many of us may be encountering colleagues, friends, or family members who are more vulnerable to addiction because of stress.

The new bulletin describes post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a proven risk factor for substance abuse and addiction that can affect people after they have suffered or witnessed an event that threatens or inflicts severe injury or death. Since September 11, many people are experiencing behavioral and adjustment problems, including PTSD symptoms. To aid public understanding of these stress-related problems, the bulletin explains the body's response to stress, how stress increases vulnerability to drug abuse, how PTSD and substance abuse are related, and how people with PTSD can be helped.

"We all must focus on restoring our emotional well-being, developing healthy ways to manage stress, and avoiding turning to drugs or other substances to escape from the realities of the day," says NIDA Acting Director Dr. Glen R. Hanson in his introduction to the bulletin.

To order the new Community Alert Bulletin, call the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, 800-729-6686 (800-487-4889 for the deaf), or order the bulletin online at www.health.org. Ask for NCADI publication #PHD914.



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Special Issue Highlights Research on Stress and Drug Abuse

Research presented at three NIDA workshops addressing aspects of stress and drug dependence is now compiled in a special issue of *Psychoneuroendocrinology* (Vol. 27, No. 1/2, January/February 2002). Dr. Harold W. Gordon of NIDA's Division of Treatment Research and Development (DTRD), Dr. Maria Dorota Majewska of DTRD, and Dr. Pushpa Thadani of the Division of Neuroscience and Behavioral Research edited the special issue.

Selected articles from the workshops, which explore how stress may induce brain developmental changes that underlie drug abuse vulnerability, include the following by NIDA-supported investigators:

- The HPA Axis and Cocaine Reinforcement, Dr. Nick E. Goeders and colleagues, Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, Shreveport;
- Environmental Regulation of the Development of Mesolimbic Dopamine Systems: A Neurobiological Mechanism for Vulnerability to Drug Abuse?, Dr. Michael J. Meaney and colleagues, McGill University, Montreal, Canada;
- Prenatal Opiate Exposure: Long-Term CNS Consequences in the Stress System, Dr. Ilona Vathy, Albert Einstein College of Medicine, Bronx, New York.

Chronic Marijuana Abuse May Increase Risk of Stroke

Dr. Ronald I. Herning and Dr. Jean Lud Cadet, with colleagues at NIDA's Intramural Research Program in Baltimore, report preliminary evidence suggesting that chronic abuse of marijuana can restrict blood flow to the brain and increase the risk of stroke for young men aged 18 to 30.

The investigators used transcranial Doppler sonography, a noninvasive technology that uses sound waves to take measurements and create images, to calculate the pulsatility index -- a measure of resistance to blood flow -- in cerebral arteries of 35 male participants, 16 long-term marijuana users and 19 nonusers of marijuana. Marijuana users had higher resistance to blood flow to their brains than did nonusers upon initial measurement, and the deficits persisted after the marijuana abusers remained abstinent for a month, well past the time when acute withdrawal symptoms were reported. As a result, the deficits do not

appear to be related to a temporary withdrawal syndrome.

The findings suggest that, at least within the first 4 weeks of marijuana abstinence, blood flow in the brain in young marijuana abusers is comparable to that of 60-year-olds, which may be of clinical importance because advancing age increases the risk of stroke.

The study was published in the June 2001 *Annals of the New York Academy of Science*.

Therapy Manual 4 Coming Soon

Drug Counseling for Cocaine Addiction: The Collaborative Cocaine Treatment Study Model, the fourth in NIDA's "Therapy Manuals for Drug Addiction" series, is scheduled for publication in May. The Collaborative Cocaine Treatment Study (CCTS), supported by NIDA at multiple university medical centers, produced the Group Drug Counseling (GDC) model that underlies this new manual.

Over the past 20 years, NIDA has found behavioral approaches to be very effective in treating cocaine addiction. The GDC model acknowledges that biological, psychological, sociocultural, and spiritual factors together contribute to the development of cocaine dependence. It addresses common issues in the early and middle stages of recovery from addiction, such as managing craving and understanding the relapse process. CCTS findings showed that while the psychological treatments helped all people addicted to cocaine, the GDC-individual drug counseling combination produced the best results.

All of the "Therapy Manuals for Drug Addiction" can be viewed at NIDA's Web site, www.drugabuse.gov, and ordered through the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, www.health.org or 800-729-6686 (800-487-4889 for the deaf).

PSAs Warn Young Adults: Drug Use Can Impair Judgment, Result in Health Problems

"Jack and Jill went up the hill . . .," but what happens next is not your typical nursery rhyme.

Using up-to-the-minute slang and



animation, NIDA's new series of TV public service announcements (PSAs) is designed to engage young viewers with a cautionary tale about the dangerous link between drug use and sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS. Among 13- to 24-year-olds with diagnosed HIV infection in 1999, nearly half of the cases (49 percent) were attributed to sexual transmission.

The messages show that when people take drugs, their judgment suffers, and they may fail to consider the possible health consequences of sexual activity. The conclusion is, "When you use drugs, there's no happy ending. Keep your body healthy. Don't use drugs."

Broadcast outlets received eight versions of the 30-second PSA. Six are in English, three narrated by a male and three by a female, each narrator addressing general drug use, ecstasy use, and World AIDS Day. In the two Spanish versions of the PSA, titled "Juan y María," a male announcer presents the general drug use and World AIDS Day messages.

Radio versions of the PSAs were released in January, and NIDA is also distributing print ads from the Jack and Jill campaign for national publication in such markets as TV magazines included in Sunday newspapers. Marvel Comics included a full-page Jack and Jill ad in one of its December 2001 editions.

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Announcer: The National Institute on Drug Abuse presents a tale about the dangers of drugs entitled "Jack and Jill."



Jill got dizzy and so did he. They both got busy and felt so free.



Never did it occur that the other may be the one infected with HIV.



Announcer: When you use drugs, there's no happy ending. Keep your body healthy. Don't use drugs.

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