

# NIAAA NEWSLETTER

FEATURING INFORMATION FROM THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON ALCOHOL ABUSE AND ALCOHOLISM

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## Kenneth Warren Named Deputy Director

NIAAA Director Dr. Ting-Kai Li recently appointed Dr. Kenneth R. Warren as NIAAA Deputy Director. Dr. Warren joined NIAAA in 1976 as a staff member of the then Division of Research. From 1984 to 2005 he directed the Office of Scientific Affairs, with responsibilities that included peer review, grants management, committee management, and scientific communications. From 2002 to 2007 he served as Associate Director for Basic Research, and over the past year he also was Acting Director of the Office of Science Policy and Communications.

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## Free Online Training for Clinicians

A new, interactive video training program from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) demonstrates quick and effective strategies for screening patients for heavy drinking and helping them to cut down or quit.

"The video scenarios demonstrate evidence-based techniques for assessing and managing at-risk drinking and alcohol use disorders," says NIAAA Director Dr. Ting-Kai Li. "We want to make these techniques widely available to clinicians so that more people with alcohol use problems will get the help they need." Called *Video Case Studies: Helping Patients Who Drink Too Much*, the program is available through the NIAAA Web site at [www.niaaa.nih.gov/guide](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/guide).

Based on the NIAAA *Clinician's Guide*, the online program features four 10-minute video case scenarios, each led by an expert clinician who offers insights and engages viewers in considering different strategies for treatment and followup. Continuing education credit for physicians and nurses who

use the training program is provided through Medscape.com.

"The videos model clinicians interacting with patients with different levels of alcohol involvement and who are in different stages of readiness to change," noted Mark Willenbring, M.D., director of NIAAA's Division of Treatment and Recovery Research. "The video scenarios take place in several different settings to show that clinicians in primary care, mental health, and other specialties are all in a prime position to make a difference."

"As physicians, we see the serious impact that excessive alcohol use can have on patients, their families, and public safety," said Ronald M. Davis, M.D., president of the American Medical Association. "Scientific evidence shows if we can prevent alcohol consumption from becoming a problem, we can help stop thousands, even millions, of alcohol-related diseases and injuries. The AMA encourages physicians to learn how to conduct screening and brief interventions for at-risk drinking behavior and how to identify and treat alcoholism."

NIAAA's new online training program



## Staff Departures

*Dr. Peter Delany* left NIAAA to join the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) as director of the Office of Applied Studies, where he was a senior program management officer before coming to NIAAA in 2006. At NIAAA, Dr. Delany was a health scientist administrator in the Division of Treatment and Recovery Research responsible for the development and management of the health services research program.

*Dr. Laurie Foudin*, health scientist administrator in the Division of Metabolism and Health Effects (DMHE), retired in December. She came to NIAAA in 1985 and oversaw the neuroscience portfolio until its reorganization in 1987. From 1988 to 2003 Dr. Foudin coordinated the basic research portfolio on fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD). She also was involved in several collaborative agreements and has represented NIAAA on the Interagency Coordinating Committee on FAS since 2006.

*Dr. Norman Salem* retired in January after more than 30 years at NIAAA and the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. He had been chief of the Laboratory of Membrane Biochemistry and Biophysics within NIAAA's intramural research program since 1991; prior to that, he was a section chief in the Laboratory of Clinical Studies, NIAAA. During his tenure at NIAAA, his laboratory was internationally recognized for work on essential fatty acids, particularly the omega-3 fatty acid, docosahexaenoate (DHA).

*Dr. Ernestine Vanderveen* retired in February from her position as director of the NIAAA Office of Extramural Activities. In a special memorandum to staff, NIAAA Director Dr. Ting-Kai Li wrote, "We miss Tina and thank her

for many years of dedicated and hard work in the field of alcohol research, spanning both program and review responsibilities." Pending recruitment and hiring of her replacement, *Dr. Abraham Bautista* will serve as Acting Director, Office of Extramural Activities; as Research Integrity Officer, Financial Conflict of Interest Liaison related to NIH-funded institutions/researchers; and as representative to the Extramural Program Management Committee.

## New Appointments

*Dr. Veronica Alvarez* joined NIAAA in January as a tenure track scientist and acting chief of the Section on Neuronal Structure within the Laboratory for Integrative Neuroscience. She will establish and conduct an independent research program focused on neuronal morphology, structural plasticity, and neuronal function in relation to development, addiction, and neurological disorders.

*Dr. Zhigang (Peter) Gao* joined DMHE as a program director. His research has focused on human hematopoietic stem cells, bone marrow-derived stem cells, hemoglobin, and vector development for gene therapy. His specific areas of expertise also include chemotherapeutic drug studies and animal models for oncology research. Previously he was a senior research fellow at the National Institute on Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases.

*Dr. Max Guo* was selected as deputy director, DMHE. Dr. Guo joined NIAAA in 2002 as a program director of genetics and genomics. Since 2006, he also has served as a co-leader of the NIAAA team on mechanisms of alcohol action and injury and the SBIR/STTR coordinator for NIAAA. Dr. Guo has worked effectively in NIAAA's transdisciplinary organiza-

tional structure to promote the use of new technologies, alternative animal models, and an integrated approach to studying alcohol-induced disorders. He has represented NIAAA on a number of NIH Roadmap activities.

*Dr. Dale Hereld* joined DMHE as a program director in January. He obtained his M.D. and Ph.D. degrees, as well as postdoctoral training, from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. His research at the medical school of the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston focused on elucidating mechanisms of G protein-coupled receptor function and regulation. Dr. Hereld's specific areas of expertise include signal transduction and chemotaxis.

## Honors

*APA Fellow:* Dr. Howard Moss was named APA Fellow by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). Newly designated APA Fellows will be formally recognized at a convocation ceremony during the APA's annual meeting in Washington, DC, in May.

*Surgeon General Commendation:* In September, Drs. Vivian Faden and Patricia Powell received a commendation from Acting U.S. Surgeon General Kenneth Moritsugu. The commendation reads: "For Outstanding Support and Service to the Office of the Surgeon General as Co-Sponsor and Co-Coordinator of the *Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking*."

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## APIS Updates Alcohol Policy Information

The Alcohol Policy Information System (APIS), a project of NIAAA, recently announced its latest update of State-by-State alcohol policies. The January update, which covers all 36 of the APIS “policy topics,” is now available at <http://www.alcoholpolicy.niaaa.nih.gov/>. The update covers the period January 2, 2006, through January 1, 2007.

APIS is an online resource that provides detailed information on selected alcohol-related policies from across the United States.

In all, the update highlights more than 40 changes in State alcohol policy statutes and regulations. The following are among the most prominent of these changes:

- Connecticut, Oklahoma, and Rhode Island have adopted laws to impose criminal liability on those who host underage drinking parties;
- North Carolina and Wyoming have adopted keg registration laws.

Seven changes were made to taxes on beer, wine, distilled spirits, and flavored alcohol beverages. Among the most significant:

- Mississippi has repealed its 1 percent sales tax on beer, wine, and distilled spirits, and Maryland has repealed its county-specific volume tax on beer while retaining a statewide tax of \$0.09 per gallon on beer;
- Colorado, Connecticut, and Nevada have adopted provisions that specifically prohibit insurers from denying insurance benefits for losses resulting from intoxication of the insured;
- Alaska has adopted a reporting requirements provision mandating that pregnant women who consume alcohol be reported to child welfare services;
- in contrast, South Dakota has added a provision to its reporting requirements laws to permit discretionary referral of women who consume alcohol during pregnancy to assessment or treatment services.

Visit the APIS Web site to obtain details on these important policy developments and to review other changes in alcohol policy from across the country.

## NIH Vodcast on YouTube Features Interview with DTRR Director Willenbring

The popular video site YouTube now has a dedicated channel for the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Called “i on NIH,” the site presents short videos where visitors can learn more about NIH research. The episodes are posted by the NIH Office of the Director.

In April, *i on NIH* posted an episode that includes an interview with Dr. Mark Willenbring, director of NIAAA’s Division of Treatment and Recovery Research.

In this segment, the NIH caption explains, “A key question when it comes to alcohol abuse is How Much is Too Much.” Throughout the 9-minute interview, Dr. Willenbring discusses how and why people drink too much,

too fast, and too often. He also defines a standard drink and outlines NIAAA’s daily and weekly drinking limits for men and women. He addresses risk factors for and symptoms of alcohol use disorders, and gives practical advice on how people can cut down on drinking.

The video also features slides and charts excerpted from the NIAAA *Clinician’s Guide: Helping Patients Who Drink Too Much*.

Visitors can watch the Vodcast online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l8-xWecANJg>.

To see other videos from NIH, visit the main channel at [http://www.youtube.com/profile\\_videos?user=NIHOD](http://www.youtube.com/profile_videos?user=NIHOD).

## NEW PUBLICATIONS

*Alcohol Research & Health: Systems Biology: The Solution to Understanding Alcohol-Induced Disorders?*

Systems biology is an exciting new field that makes use of the latest advances in technology—including the complete mapping of the human genetic code, and a set of new tools known collectively as “-omics” technologies—to explore how the parts of the human body work together as a synchronized whole. This issue of *Alcohol Research & Health* explores how systems biology might be especially relevant to alcoholism, allowing researchers to understand and model the complex mechanisms behind alcohol addiction.

*Alcohol Alert:*

*Alcohol Alert #74: Alcohol Research: A Lifespan Perspective*

This *Alcohol Alert* provides an overview of the *National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) Five-Year Strategic Plan*. It spotlights the Lifespan Perspective, the document’s fundamental organizing principle featured as a dynamic framework within which researchers can further explore how alcohol affects people at different stages of development, and how different stages of development affect drinking behaviors. The complete text of the Five-Year Strategic Plan can be downloaded from the *What’s New* section of the NIAAA Web site.

These NIAAA publications and other resources are available free for downloading as full-text documents, visit [www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov), or write to: NIAAA, Publications Distribution Center, P.O. Box 10686, Rockville, MD 20849-0686.

## Conference Series Spotlights Mechanisms of Behavior Change

This spring NIAAA is cosponsoring a three-part conference series spotlighting the science of behavior change. “This is a hot area of interest now for researchers,” explains Dr. Angela Martinelli of NIAAA’s Division of Treatment and Recovery Research. She is coordinating the Spring 2008 Symposia Series on Mechanisms of Behavior Change at NIH.

NIAAA has spearheaded a number of recent initiatives focused on how and why behavior change occurs both within and outside the context of professionally facilitated treatment. Dr. Martinelli explains this research could have enormous benefits. For example, it could reduce complexity where more than 500 treatments are currently used by mental health practitioners. Second, identifying the active ingredients of treatment and the mechanisms through which they work will help clinicians discard unnecessary components and amplify the effect of the change mechanisms. This could boost future treatments’ effectiveness and efficiency. Third, this research could advance the understanding of pathological behaviors, and how to change behavior more generally.

This hot topic also has broad scientific appeal. Recently NIH officials identified the science of behavior change as an essential focus for the NIH Roadmap 2.0. This multidisciplinary interest is also illustrated by NIAAA’s many cosponsors for the symposia series. They include the National Cancer Institute, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the NIH Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research, and the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

At the first symposium on February 27, “Getting at Why People Change,” Dr. Matthew K. Nock of Harvard University described the conceptual, methodological, and statistical requirements that must be met to demonstrate the operation of mechanisms of behavior change in treatment. Recent innovations in psychological science can be used to measure potential mechanisms of behavior change. New cognitive training interventions involving brief, repetitive exercises can be used to directly target potential mechanisms of behavior change in treatment and ultimately to change pathological behaviors.

The second lecturer, Dr. Marsha E. Bates from the Rutgers University Center for Alcohol Studies, discussed practical challenges for conducting translational research. These include bringing together interdisciplinary research teams and developing discovery-oriented research designs, innovative quantitative approaches, and concrete plans to accomplish basic/clinical science bi-directionality. She also differentiated stages of translational research and presented models as a way to help think about mapping the processes through which scientific discoveries can be transformed into clinical applications.

NIH created a videocast and podcast of the event. To access the archive, search the “Past Events” section of <http://videocast.nih.gov>. The next two symposia are scheduled for April 16 and June 18. NIAAA also will present a free satellite meeting on June 28 called “Mechanisms of Behavior Change in Behavioral Treatment: Today and Tomorrow.”

For more details, look for upcoming e-mail announcements, see the NIH events calendar, or send a note to [martinellia@mail.nih.gov](mailto:martinellia@mail.nih.gov).

## Calendar of Events

*NIAAA will participate in or exhibit at meetings and conferences listed below. For additional information or updates on these events, consult the sponsoring organization.*

### APRIL

- **April 16**  
*Symposia on Mechanisms of Behavior Change, Part 2: Why People Do Stupid Things (and Can We Help Them Stop?); Videocast live at <http://videocast.nih.gov>, and available afterwards in the Archive*  
  
Bethesda, MD  
Contact: <http://calendar.nih.gov>  
[martinellia@mail.nih.gov](mailto:martinellia@mail.nih.gov)
- **April 17–20**  
*National Hispanic Medical Association (NHMA) 12th Annual Medical Conference*  
  
Washington, DC  
Contact: <http://www.nhmamd.org/conference2008.htm>

### MAY

- **May 3–8**  
*American Psychiatric Association (APA) 161st Annual Meeting*  
  
Washington, DC  
Contact: <http://www.psych.org/>

### JUNE / JULY

- **June 5, 2008**  
*National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism*  
  
Bethesda, MD  
Contact: Abraham Bautista,  
[bautista@mail.nih.gov](mailto:bautista@mail.nih.gov), 301/443–9737

- **June 27–July 3**  
*Research Society on Alcoholism (RSA) 31st Annual Conference*  
  
Washington, DC  
Contact: <http://www.rsoa.org/2007meetFutures.htm>
- **June 28**  
*Satellite Meeting: Mechanisms of Behavior Change in Behavioral Treatment: Today and Tomorrow.*  
  
Grand Hyatt Hotel, Washington, DC  
Contact: <http://casaa.unm.edu/mechanismsofchange/index.html>