

Drug Addiction Research and the Health of Women

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Two publications have been produced based on the September 1994 conference "Drug Addiction Research and the Health of Women," sponsored by the National Institute on Drug Abuse. This volume, *Drug Addiction Research and the Health of Women*, builds on the conference presentations and provides greatly expanded reviews of research in this field. A companion volume, *Drug Addiction Research and the Health of Women: Executive Summary*, contains condensed versions of the conference presentations as well as the ensuing discussion sessions.

To obtain copies of either publication contact the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI), P.O. Box 2345, Rockville, MD 20847-2345, 1-800-NCADI-64 (622-3464) or see its World Wide Web site: <http://www.health.org>.

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Foreword

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Drug abuse and addiction are among the most pressing health and social issues facing our Nation, posing serious health risks and often tragic consequences for those who are afflicted and for their families and communities. Although extraordinary progress has been made in understanding these disorders and in finding the best ways to prevent and treat them, unfortunately, research on drug abuse and addiction related to women has, until relatively recently, been sorely neglected. Most drug abuse interventions developed to date, including prevention and treatment programs, have largely been shaped by men's characteristics and needs. Because women traditionally have been underrepresented in research studies and drug abuse treatment groups, the effects of drug abuse are far less understood for women than for men. But the scientific evidence generated thus far suggests that drug abuse and addiction present different challenges to women's health, progress differently in females than in males, and may require different treatment approaches and strategies. Moreover, the rapid increase in AIDS cases among women in recent years makes it all the more critical to address gender differences as they relate to drug problems.

In an effort to assess and begin to fill the gaps that exist in knowledge about drug abuse and women's health, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the Federal agency leading the Nation's research efforts on drug abuse and addiction, sponsored a national conference in September 1994 titled "Drug Addiction Research and the Health of Women." This 2-day meeting brought together leading researchers to present state-of-the-science findings, discuss research issues and challenges confronting the field, and lay the framework for NIDA's research agenda in this important area. Condensed versions of the presentations made at the 1994 conference, as well as the ensuing discussion sessions, are contained in a companion volume, *Drug Addiction Research and the Health of Women: Executive Summary*.

The chapters contained in this research volume build on the conference presentations and represent greatly expanded reviews of research in the field. These indepth, state-of-the-science reviews emphasize that

the causes, correlates, pharmacokinetics, mechanisms, and consequences of drug abuse and addiction vary considerably between men and women. The authors highlight much of what is known about the epidemiology, the etiology, and the health, social, and behavioral consequences of drug abuse and addiction. Biological mechanisms underlying these processes and legal, prevention, and treatment issues surrounding drug abuse and addiction also are discussed. Taken together, the material clearly illustrates the breadth and complexity of drug abuse-related issues that affect women's health. This information also provides a foundation on which NIDA can frame a scientifically diverse and vigorous research agenda with the goal of ensuring that women's needs related to drug abuse and addiction are more successfully met.

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