

NewsScan

NIDA ADDICTION RESEARCH NEWS

SPECIAL COLLEGE ISSUE

Research News

First-Year College Students Show High Rate of Cannabis Use Disorders

In the first study to measure the prevalence of cannabis use disorders (CUD) among young adults attending college, researchers funded by NIDA found that in a group of students who had used cannabis 5 or more times in the past year, 1 in 10 met the clinical *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)-IV* definition for cannabis dependence, and 14.5 percent met the definition for cannabis abuse. The researchers screened 3,401 first-year college students and recruited 1,253 to participate in the study. Interviewers asked all participants about their use of 10 illicit substances. Students who had used cannabis 5 or more times in the past year (474 participants) were considered at risk for CUD and were asked to answer questions about problems they may have encountered in the past year because of their cannabis use. Of these students, 24.3 percent regularly put themselves in physical danger when under the influence, and 10.6 percent continued to use despite problems with family or friends. In addition, 40.1 percent reported concentration problems, and 13.9 percent reported missing class. In addition to the students who met the criteria for CUD, 12.6 percent met only one or two of the *DSM-IV* criteria for dependence (but not abuse) and were classified as diagnostic orphans, "suggesting that some cannabis-using college students might be at risk for cannabis-related problems even if they do not appear to be heavy users," explain the authors. "The prevalence of CUD and other cannabis-related problems are not trivial, and if replicated, these findings highlight the need for improved screening and early intervention for drug-related problems among first-year college students," they conclude.

Caldeira KM, Arria AM, O'Grady KE, Vincent KB, Wish ED. The occurrence of cannabis use disorders and other cannabis-related problems among first-year college students. *Addict Behav.* 2008;33(3):397-411.

Nonmedical Use of Prescription Stimulants Among First-Year College Students

In a large study of first-year college students at a mid-Atlantic university, NIDA-funded researchers found that 13.5 percent of students they interviewed had used prescription stimulants for nonmedical reasons at least once in their lifetime. The investigators selected 1,253 first-year students, ranging in age from 17 to 19, from a college orientation session—the demographic characteristics of this sample were similar to those of the general university population. Out of 45 students taking prescription stimulants for attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), 33 percent had either overused their own prescription, used someone else's medication in addition to their own, or both. Out of the remaining 1,208 students without a diagnosis of ADHD, 18 percent had used prescription stimulants for nonmedical reasons at least once. Some of the reasons given for nonmedical use were to improve concentration for studying or schoolwork, partying, or to get high. Most students obtained the drugs from friends with a prescription, and most received the drugs for free. Students who had used prescription stimulants nonmedically at least once in their life were significantly more likely to have past-year use of other illicit or prescription drugs (nonmedical). These results were independent of a diagnosis of ADHD or sociodemographic background. Determining the extent of overuse of prescription drugs and the reasons as to why it occurs will be helpful in developing prevention strategies to curb their use on college campuses. Authors plan to follow their sample of students to better understand the later consequences of nonmedical use of prescription stimulants.

Arria AM, Caldeira KM, O'Grady KE, Vincent KB, Johnson EP, Wish ED. Nonmedical use of prescription stimulants among college students: Associations with attention-deficit-hyperactivity disorder and polydrug use. *Pharmacotherapy.* 2008;28(2):156-169.

NEWS UPDATE

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Graphic Warnings Change Viewers' Perception of Tobacco Advertisements

Advertisements for potentially reduced-exposure tobacco products (PREPs), such as chewing tobacco and reduced-carcinogen cigarettes, often make claims of the products' safety in comparison to regular tobacco products. A study conducted by the Minnesota Transdisciplinary Tobacco Use Research Center and funded by NIDA and the National Cancer Institute found that including a graphic warning label on PREPs' advertising affects both consumer appeal for the product and perception of the safety claims included in the advertisements. Researchers recruited 92 college students for the study, 24 of whom had smoked in the last 30 days, and asked them to view advertisements for three different types of PREPs: chewing tobacco, nicotine lozenge, and reduced-carcinogen cigarettes. Half of the participants viewed advertisements with standard Surgeon General's tobacco warning labels, and half viewed advertisements where the warnings included a picture of a diseased heart or mouth. Participants who viewed advertisements containing the graphic warning label were less interested in trying the products, found the products less appealing, and rated the safety claims of the advertisements as less trustworthy. Compared to the other PREPs in the study, inclusion of the graphic warning did not significantly alter perceptions of the nicotine lozenge, perhaps because nicotine lozenges are an accepted aid for smoking cessation. "As more and more products enter the market with diverse claims about reduced harm, health policymakers may wish to consider incorporating the use of graphic pictures with warnings to ensure balanced information about these products for the consumer," state the authors. Future studies testing such warnings in heavy smokers will be useful to determine to what extent this population is influenced by graphic warnings.

Stark E, Kim A, Miller C, Borgida E. Effects of including a graphic warning label in advertisements for reduced-exposure products: Implications for persuasion and policy. *J Appl Soc Psychol.* 2008;38(2):281-293.

Parental Monitoring Reduces High School Drinking, Leading to Reduced College Drinking

Drinking among college students, especially those that are underage, is a major public health concern. A recent study of more than 1,200 first-year college students revealed that parental monitoring in the last year of high school significantly impacts alcohol consumption. Interviewers asked students about their living situation in college; alcohol consumption in high school and college; and their perceptions of parental monitoring during the last year of high school, such as being required to tell parents of their evening plans and having consequences for breaking curfew. Higher levels of parental monitoring and supervision were associated with less alcohol consumption in high school, regardless of students' sex or race or the importance of religion in their lives. Moreover, the amount that students drank in high school was a significant predictor for drinking in college. "While parental monitoring did not directly influence college alcohol consumption, evidence for mediation was observed whereby parental monitoring indirectly reduced college drinking through reductions in high school drinking," explain the authors. Although the study was limited to a single university and did not explore the mechanism by which parental monitoring reduces high school alcohol consumption, the results "extend support for parental monitoring and supervision during the high school years as a strategy to reduce adolescent drinking," conclude the authors.

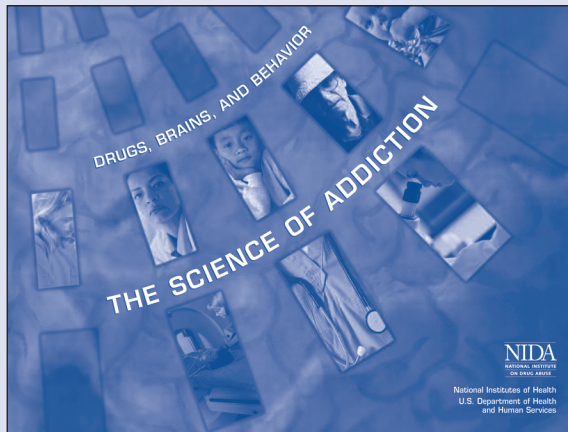
Arria AM, Kuhn V, Caldeira KM, O'Grady KE, Vincent KB, Wish ED. High school drinking mediates the relationship between parental monitoring and college drinking: A longitudinal analysis. *Subst Abuse Treat Prev Policy.* 2008;7:3-6.

Higher Prevalence of Sexual Risk Behavior Found in Teens Not Attending College

In a study of 865 teenagers in the fall after their high school graduation, researchers funded by NIDA found that teens who went on to college (either on 2-year or 4-year programs) had a lower prevalence of sexual risk behavior (SRB) than those who did not, regardless of whether they still lived with their parents or had moved out on their own. The teenagers were all participants in the Raising Healthy Children project, a longitudinal study of students in a suburban Washington State school district, and had been followed by the researchers since the first or second grade. Using questionnaires and interviews, the researchers determined that about 23 percent of the college students reported using condoms inconsistently, compared to about 35 percent of teens not in college; about 15 percent of college students reported engaging in casual sex, compared to about 29 percent of teens not in college; and about 5 percent of college students reported engaging in high-risk sex (defined mainly as a combination of casual and unprotected sex), compared to about 16 percent of teens not in college. Although a large proportion of college students engaged in SRB, the prevalence was lower than among nonstudents. Interestingly, this difference could be explained by prior risk behavior and academic performance in high school. "College

students in this sample reported lower rates of SRB largely because they were more likely to do well in school and less likely to use drugs and to engage in SRB during high school. Thus, patterns of behavior that had been established in high school were continued in the fall after high school,” explain the authors. Prevention efforts targeting a reduction in substance use and SRB, and improving academic performance during high school “should result in reductions in the prevalence of SRB in the transition to adulthood,” they conclude.

Bailey JA, Fleming CB, Henson JN, Catalano RF, Haggerty KP. Sexual risk behavior 6 months post-high school: Associations with college attendance, living with a parent, and prior risk behavior. *J Adolesc Health*. 2008;42(6):573–579.



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Notes

For more information about any item in this *NewsScan*:

- All studies described can be obtained through PubMed (www.pubmed.gov).
- **Reporters**, call **Stephanie Older** at 301-443-6245.
- **Congressional staffers**, call **Geoffrey Laredo** at 301-594-6852.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) is a component of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIDA supports most of the world's research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction. The Institute carries out a large variety of programs to ensure the rapid dissemination of research information and its implementation in policy and practice. Fact sheets on the health effects of drugs of abuse and other topics are available in English and Spanish. These fact sheets and further information on NIDA research and other activities can be found on the NIDA home page at <http://www.drugabuse.gov>. To order publications in English or Spanish, call NIDA's new *DrugPubs* Research Dissemination center at 1-877-NIDA-NIH (1-877-643-2644) or 240-645-0228 (TDD), or fax or e-mail requests to 240-645-0227 or drugpubs@nida.nih.gov.

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