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NIDA Explores Exercise as Drug Abuse Prevention Tool

Four million dollar grant initiative to spur research

It is well known that exercise is an important part of a healthy lifestyle but can exercise programs actually reduce the likelihood of drug abuse and thus prevent addiction? The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), is holding a seminal conference on June 5-6 to explore a possible role for physical activity in substance abuse prevention. As part of this effort, NIDA announced a \$4 million grant initiative to spur further research on this emerging area of investigation.

“Exercise has been shown to be beneficial in so many areas of physical and mental health,” said Dr. Nora Volkow, NIDA Director. “This cross-disciplinary meeting is designed to get scientists thinking creatively about its potential role in substance abuse prevention.”

More than 100 scientists from around the country are gathering for the two-day conference. The goals of the meeting are:

- To share the state of the science in epidemiology, basic science, and intervention research—focused on physical activity as a strategy to prevent substance abuse;
- To facilitate development and testing of new paradigms for prevention; and
- To promote future research in these areas.

Presentations will focus on the importance of the social context in which physical activity occurs, including school and the natural environment, as well as the relationship of physical activity to physical disorders (obesity), social reward structures (motivation), cognition (attention, impulse control and other motor skills), and mood disorders (depression, stress), all of which may play a role in substance abuse. To facilitate research on the role of exercise, attendees will also learn about and see demonstrations of tools that assess physiological responses to exercise and physical activity.

The meeting is taking place on the NIH campus, and will include participants from several other NIH institutes as well as experts from around the world. On the second day of the meeting, Sally Squires, the author of the *Washington Post's Lean Plate Club* will share insights and feedback from her column on what the public wants to know about physical activity and health.

A full agenda and speaker list is available at:
www.sei2003.com/NIDA/1014032/index.htm

[The meeting will be Webcast at http://videocast.nih.gov/](http://videocast.nih.gov/)

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The National Institute on Drug Abuse 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 inform policy and improve practice. Fact sheets on the health effects of drugs of abuse and information on NIDA research and other activities can be found on the NIDA home page at www.drugabuse.gov.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) — *The Nation's Medical Research Agency* — includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary Federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit www.nih.gov.