# News & Notes

## ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY FINDS MILLIONS OF AMERICANS IN DENIAL ABOUT DRUG ABUSE

The Household Survey on Drug Abuse is conducted annually by DHHS's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). In 2001, it included approximately 70,000 people ages 12 and older. The 2001 Survey incorporated questions for adults intended to measure mental illness for the first time.

The survey concluded that there was indeed a strong relationship between substance abuse and mental illness. The rate among adults with serious mental illness (SMI) and dependency on or abuse of alcohol or illicit drugs was 20.3 percent; the rate of those who demonstrated dependency on or abuse of alcohol or illicit drugs and did not have SMI was 6.3 percent.

Other findings of the Survey included that more than 4.6 million people who meet the requirements for needing treatment do not recognize their need. It showed that 15.9 million Americans ages 12 and older (7.1%) used some type of illicit drug in the month preceding the survey as compared to 6.3% in 2000. Approximately 10.8% of young people ages12–17 were current drug users, compared to 9.7% in the 2000 survey. The survey showed no significant changes in the rates of drug abuse among adults ages 26 years and older. Rates of youth cigarette use decreased for the third year from 14.9% in 1999 to 13.4% in 2000 and 13.0% in 2001.

The complete report on the Household Survey on Drug Abuse is available at: http://www.DrugAbuseStatistics.samhsa.gov.

## FOOD SAFETY: SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The American Public Health Association (APHA) stated in their Food Safety Fact Sheet for August 2002 that they were advocating the creation of a single and independent food safety agency to inspect and enforce food safety regulations and activities. APHA is advocating this centralization of food regulation in an attempt to eliminate the fundamental inconsistencies, overlaps, competing priorities, and gaps that currently exist in the regulation of imported and domestic food by the current numerous federal agencies.

APHA suggested the following improvements to the nation's food safety system: (*a*) Strengthen domestic food safety regulations and require imported food producers to comply with food safety standards equivalent to those required for domestically produced food. (*b*) Standardize existing statutes to provide recall, civil penalty, and other authorities to all federal food safety activities. (*c*) Invest sufficient resources to develop information systems that provide public health officials with the essential information to develop a food safety policy and increase funding for new and already existing systems for foodborne illness and other chemical hazard surveillance. (*d*) Increase border inspections and penalties for violations of food safety laws.

The complete Food Safety Fact Sheet for August 2002 is available at: URL: http://www.apha.org/legislative/factsheets/foodsafety.htm.

## CONFRONTING CHRONIC NEGLECT

A recent report released by the Institute of Medicine, *The Education and Training of Health Professionals on Family Violence*, offers a great deal of information about abuse and neglect. It provides numerous ways in which health care practitioners can improve training and raise awareness about screening, diagnosing, and treating victims of abuse and neglect.

Four major recommendations are presented in the report: (*a*) The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) should create centers that would conduct research on the impact of family violence on the health care system, and evaluate training and education programs for health care professionals. (*b*) Educators and professional organizations for health care practitioners should include training in their everyday practice. (*c*) Health care delivery systems and training centers should assume greater responsibility for developing, testing, and evaluating new training models and programs. (*d*) Federal agencies and other subsidizing organizations should provide support and incentives for evaluating curriculum on family violence for health professionals. The evaluations should include the impact of the training on the practice of the health professionals and the outcomes for the victims of violence.

The complete report is available at: http://www.bocyf.org/What's_New_at_the_BOCYF.html.

## INSULIN RESISTANCE BEHIND KIDNEY DISEASE IN DIABETICS

Dr. Trevor Orchard, the acting chairman of the department of epidemiology at the University Of Pittsburgh Graduate School Of Public Health, recently conducted a study on data from the Pittsburgh Epidemiology of Diabetes Complication Study (PEDCS), which demonstrated a relationship between insulin resistance and kidney disease. PEDCS was a 10-year project that involved 658 adults with Type I diabetes.

The research focused on 485 people who did not have nephropathy at the beginning of the study. Out of these subjects, 56 developed nephropathy within the 10-year tracking period of PEDCS. The study concluded that in all of the subjects who developed nephropathy, there was a strong relationship between insulin resistance and nephropathy. Insulin resistance was measured by a calculation based on waist-to-hip ratio, hypertension status and long-term blood sugar levels. Up to 40% of people who have Type I diabetes develop kidney disease, causing the kidneys to become unable to filter wastes and excess water from the blood.

For more information on kidney disease, consult the National Institute of Diabetes & Digestive & Kidney Diseases.

## USDOT RELEASES 2001 HIGHWAY FATALITY STATISTICS

The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHSTA) announced the results of its Fatality Reporting System (FARS) for 2001. Most impressive was the finding that motor vehicle crashes claimed the lives of fewer children ages 15 and younger than ever before recorded. The fatalities of children ages five and younger dropped a great deal as well, from 710 in 2000 to 649 in 2001. Fatalities in crashes that involved large trucks decreased from 5,282 in 2000 to 5,082 in 2001. Young drivers ages 16–20 were involved in fewer crashes in 2001—7,598 compared to 7,671 in 2000. Motorcycle fatalities increased for the fourth year in a row, however, with 3,181 deaths. This was the highest number of deaths in this category since 1990. The rate of alcohol-related deaths in 2001 remained the same as 2000 at .63 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT). The number of pedestrian deaths increased slightly, from 4,763 in 2000 to 4,882 in 2001.

The complete report from NHSTA is available at: http://www.nhsta.dot.gov/ under "Crash Statistics."

## SMOKING CESSATION AIDS USE INCREASES, SUCCESS RATE DECLINES

The American Cancer Society has announced that nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) is no longer effective in aiding moderate to heavy smokers with quitting smoking. In addition, it has no benefit for light smokers.

John P. Pierce, PhD, and Elizabeth A.Gilpin, MS, from the University of California, studied smokers in California by looking at the California Tobacco Surveys conducted annually throughout the 1990s. They examined surveys from 1992, 1996, and 1999. The percentage of smokers attempting to quit increased more than 60 percent and NRT use increased from 116,209 in 1992 to 423,290 in 1999. NRT became available over-the-counter in 1996, which created a drastic change in the success rate of smokers attempting to quit by using NRT. In 1999, smoking abstinence was short-term and the effect was comparable to those who did not use aids after approximately three months. In 1992 and 1996, it appeared that those moderate to heavy smokers who used NRT were able to refrain longer from smoking than similar subjects who did not use NRT.

The researchers suggest that NRT, in order to be successful, should be used in conjunction with other types of therapies such as behavioral counseling. It appears there was some type of benefit to the role of doctors prescribing and counseling patients, which disappeared when NRT products became available over-the-counter.

For more information on this study, visit the American Cancer Society website at http://www.cancer.org.

## ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION OF CLINICAL RESEARCH PROFESSIONALS (ACRP)

The 27th Annual North American Conference & Exposition of the ACRP will be held from April 5–9, 2003, at the Pennsylvania Convention Center in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. The theme for the meeting will be "Advancing Research Today for a Healthier Tomorrow." Arthur Caplan, PhD, is a confirmed speaker. Dr. Caplan is the Emanuel and Robert Hart Professor of Bioethics and Director of the Center for Bioethics at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author or editor of twenty-three books on bioethics; serves as consultant to countless medical organizations; is a frequent commentator in the media, including National Public Radio, CNN, and the *New York Times*; and writes a regular column on bioethics for MSNBC.com.

More information on this conference as well as a follow-up on the 2001 meeting are available at: URL: http://www.acrpnet.org/meeting/index.html.

## NHTSA REPORTS INCREASED SEAT BELT USE BY DRIVERS, PASSENGERS

Jeffrey W. Runge, MD, Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), announced that seat belt use is continuing an upward trend, reaching 75% in 2002. This is the highest level since the study began in 1994. This information was taken from the study known as the National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS), which is conducted periodically to find nationwide estimates of seat belt and motorcycle helmet use.

The results from 2002 show that in states with primary seat belt laws (vehicles may be stopped and drivers cited for failing to wear a seat belt without another violation), 80% of vehicle occupants used seat belts. States with secondary laws (a vehicle must be stopped for some other traffic violation before the passenger or driver can be cited for not using a seat belt) averaged 69% belt use. The report includes that a two percentage point increase is equivalent to an additional six million users, which is estimated to be 500 lives saved per year. Significantly, the Northeast, historically the lowest region in terms of seat belt use, showed the largest increase—8% from 2000 to 2001. The latest NOPUS statistics were derived from a three-week period in June 2002, and included a total of 150,000 vehicles and 900 motorcycles. The margin of error is 2.4 percentage points.

The complete report and all statistics are available at: http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/.

## EPA RAISES BAR FOR LISTING HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS AS BIOACCUMULATIVE

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced that, in response to industry criticism, they have raised the bar for designating compounds as bioaccumulative on its priority chemicals list. The priority chemicals list originally consisted of 53 compounds; 26 have been eliminated based on the new qualifications.

A compound's tendency to bioaccumulate measures how concentrations of a compound rise as it moves up the food chain. A compound is rated on a scale from one to three, three being the highest level, in three categories. The categories are its tendency to bioaccumulate, its toxicity, and its persistence in the environment. A chemical with a combined score of seven or higher would previously have been labeled a persistent, bioaccumulative, toxic chemical (PBT). EPA has decided to change this standard to a score of eight or higher, thus reducing the list to approximately 30 chemicals and four new organic chemicals.

The EPA has also decided to withdraw its earlier statement that all metals should be labeled bioaccumulative, in response to criticism from the metals industry and the EPA's own scientific advisors. The EPA Science Advisory Board's (SAB) Metal Assessment Panel is scheduled to complete a review of the metals framework at the end of 2003. Until then, the agency has listed several metals as priority chemicals, including lead and mercury. The agency considers this list to be its highest concern at Superfund and Resources Conservation & Recovery Act Sites.