

## **PREVENTION PROGRAMS FOR YOUNG RURAL TEENS CAN REDUCE METHAMPHETAMINE ABUSE YEARS LATER**

New research supported in part by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), National Institutes of Health, shows that prevention programs conducted in middle school can reduce methamphetamine abuse among rural adolescents years later. Because methamphetamine addiction leads to problems with social interactions and a wide range of medical conditions, research into early interventions such as this is critical to protecting the nation's youth. The paper is published in the September issue of "Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine."

"We now have evidence that prevention programs can be important tools to protect adolescents from the devastating effects of methamphetamine use, and we will continue to explore the effectiveness of other drug abuse prevention programs," says Dr. Elias A. Zerhouni, director of the National Institutes of Health. "These findings are part of our ongoing effort to support scientific research that can have practical applications in community settings."

"Previous preventive interventions have shown effects in reducing adolescents' abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana, but this is the first study to examine the effects of a preventive intervention on methamphetamine abuse among youth," says NIDA Director Dr. Nora D. Volkow. "The results of this research indicate the effectiveness of prevention programs on lifetime or annual methamphetamine abuse."

The research assessed the effects of two randomized, controlled, prevention trials on methamphetamine abuse among middle and high school students. In the first study, 667 families of rural Iowa 6th-graders were randomly assigned to participate in one of two family-focused interventions, the "Iowa Strengthening Families Project" (ISFP) or the "Preparing for the Drug Free Years" (PDFY) program, or act as controls. A total of 457 families participated in the 12th-grade follow-up.

In the second study, 679 families of rural Iowa 7th-graders were randomly recruited for the "Life Skills Training" (LST) program (a school-based intervention) combined with the "Strengthening Family Program for Parents and Youth 10-14" (SFP10-14 -- modified from the ISFP), the LST program only, or a minimal-contact control group. A total of 588 families participated in the 11th-grade follow-up and 597 families participated in the 12th-grade follow-up.

In the first study, none of the ISFP 12th-graders had abused methamphetamine in the past year compared to 3.6 percent of the PDFY 12th-graders and 3.2 percent of the controls. In the second study, the combined SFP 10-14 + LST intervention showed significant effects on both lifetime and past year methamphetamine abuse. Only 0.5 percent of this group had abused methamphetamine during the past year, compared with 2.5 percent for LST-alone and 4.2 percent of the controls. At the 12th-grade follow-up, lifetime abuse of the drug was significantly lower in both the SFP 10-14 + LST and the LST-alone groups (2.4-2.6 percent) versus the control group (7.6 percent).

"Adolescents who participated in both programs showed a relative reduction in lifetime methamphetamine abuse of 65 percent compared with the controls," says Dr. Richard

Spoth, of Iowa State University and lead author of the study. "This means that for every 100 adolescents in the general population who reported methamphetamine abuse, there would be only 35 in the intervention population reporting abuse during the same period."

The "Iowa Strengthening Families Project" and "Strengthening Family Program for Parents and Youth" target the enhancement of family protective factors and the reduction of family risk processes. The Preparing for the Drug Free Years program is designed to enhance parent-child interactions and to reduce children's risk for early substance abuse. The "Life Skills Training" program is a school-based intervention designed to foster general life skills as well as teach students tactics for resisting pressure to use drugs.

"While some of these results are very promising, further research needs to be done to investigate the applicability of these particular programs to nonrural populations, rural populations in other parts of the country, and populations with different ethnic compositions," says Dr. Spoth.

"It is important to note that methamphetamine abuse is also linked to risky sexual behaviors, which increase the risk for transmission of infectious diseases, including HIV," Dr. Volkow adds. "It is increasingly important that young people "learn the link" between drug abuse and HIV/AIDS." "Learn the Link" is the focus of NIDA's current public service campaign, designed especially for young people. Hispanic versions of the public service announcement will be available in October.

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 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 information on NIDA research and other activities can be found on the NIDA home page at <http://www.drugabuse.gov>.

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