

Friends of NIDA recommended report language for FY '06

Adolescent Brain Development -- How Understanding the Brain Can Impact Prevention Efforts. The Committee is very pleased with the Institute's focus on adolescent populations. The Committee notes research by NIDA and others showing that the human brain does not fully develop until about age 25. This adds to the rationale for referring to addiction as a "developmental disease;" it often starts during the early developmental stages in adolescence and sometimes as early as childhood, a time when we know the brain is still developing. Having insight into how the human brain works, and understanding the biological underpinnings of risk taking among young people will help in developing more effective prevention programs. The Committee encourages NIDA to continue its emphasis on adolescent brain development to better understand how developmental processes and outcomes are affected by drug exposure, the environment and genetics.

Medications Development. The Committee applauds NIDA for over a decade of leadership in working with private industry to develop anti-addiction medications and is pleased this collaboration has resulted in a new medication for opiate addiction. The Committee encourages NIDA to continue its work with the private sector to develop anti-addiction medications, particularly for cocaine, methamphetamine, and marijuana.

Co-Occurring Disorders. The Committee recognizes substance abuse rarely occurs in isolation. To adequately address co-occurring health problems, especially those that involve substance abuse and mental health problems, the Committee encourages the Institute to work with other agencies (such as NIMH and SAMHSA) to stimulate new research to develop effective strategies and to ensure the timely adoption and implementation of evidence-based practices for the prevention and treatment of co-occurring disorders. The Committee is pleased that NIDA is supporting research to determine the most effective models of clinically appropriate treatment and how to bring them to communities with limited resources.

Drug Abuse and HIV/AIDS -- The Committee understands that one of the most significant causes of HIV virus acquisition and transmission is drug taking practices and related risk factors in different populations (e.g. criminal justice, pregnant women, minorities, and youth). Drug abuse prevention and treatment interventions have been shown to be effective in reducing HIV risk. Therefore, the Committee urges NIDA to continue its support of research that is focused on the development and testing of drug-abuse related interventions designed to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS in these populations.

Emerging Drug Problems. The Committee recognizes that drug use patterns are constantly changing and is pleased with NIDA's efforts to monitor drug use trends and to rapidly inform the public of emerging drug problems. The Committee especially encourages NIDA to continue supporting research that provides reliable data on emerging drug trends, particularly among youth and in major cities across the country. NIDA is

encouraged to be a leader in alerting communities to new trends and creating awareness about these drugs.

Reducing Prescription Drug Abuse. The Committee notes the recent increases in the numbers of adults and young people who are using prescription drugs for non-medical purposes. Reducing prescription drug abuse, particularly among our Nation's youth should continue to be a priority for NIDA. The committee also urges NIDA to fund research designed to further the development of medications that are unlikely to have addiction liability, and to develop prevention and treatment interventions for adolescents and adults who are abusing prescription drugs.

Reducing Methamphetamine Abuse. The Committee is very concerned about the continued abuse of methamphetamine across the United States. Methamphetamine abuse not only affects the users, but also the communities in which they live, especially due to the dangers associated with its production. The Committee urges NIDA to continue to support research to address the medical consequences of methamphetamine abuse. Topics of particular concern to the Committee include: understanding the effects of prenatal exposure to methamphetamine and developing pharmacotherapies and behavioral therapies to treat methamphetamine addiction.

Reducing Inhalant Abuse. The Committee understands and is alarmed that, for the second year in a row, NIDA's Monitoring the Future Survey (MTF) has shown an increase in the use of inhalants by 8th graders. Inhalants pose a particularly significant problem since they are readily accessible, legal, and inexpensive. They also tend to be abused by younger teens and can be highly toxic and even lethal. The Committee urges the Institute to continue its support of research on prevention and treatment of inhalant abuse, and to enhance public awareness on this issue. The Committee is particularly pleased with NIDA's recent *Community Drug Alert Bulletin: Inhalants*, as well as its new dedicated web site, www.inhalants.drugabuse.gov.

General Medical Consequences of Drug Abuse. The Committee recognizes that addiction is a disorder that affects the course of other diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular and infectious diseases. Therefore, the Committee urges the NIDA to continue to support research on the medical consequences associated with drug abuse and addiction.

Long-Term Consequences of Marijuana Use. The Committee is concerned with the continuing widespread use of marijuana. Research shows that marijuana can be detrimental to educational attainment, work performance, and cognitive function. However, more information is needed in order to assess the full impact of long-term marijuana use. The Committee urges NIDA to continue support for efforts to assess the long-term consequences of marijuana use on cognitive abilities, achievement, and mental and physical health, as well as work with the private sector to develop medications focusing on marijuana addiction.

Translating Research Into Practice. The Committee commends NIDA for its outreach and work with State substance abuse authorities to reduce the current 15- to 20-year lag

between the discovery of an effective treatment intervention and its availability at the community level. In particular, the Committee applauds NIDA for working with SAMHSA on a recent RFA designed to strengthen State agencies' capacity to support and engage in research that will foster statewide adoption of meritorious science-based policies and practices. The Committee also encourages NIDA to continue collaborative work with States to ensure that research findings are relevant and adaptable by State Substance Abuse systems.

Translational Research: Ensuring Research is Adaptable and Useable. The Committee commends NIDA for its broad and varied information dissemination programs. The Committee also understands that, as part of an effort to ensure drug abuse research is used in everyday practice, the Institute is focused on stimulating and supporting innovative research to determine the components necessary for adopting, adapting, delivering, and maintaining effective research-supported policies, programs, and practices. As evidence-based strategies are developed, the Committee urges NIDA to support research to determine how these practices can be best implemented at the community level.

Primary Care Settings and Youth. The Committee recognizes that primary care settings, such as offices of pediatricians and general practitioners, are potential key points of access to prevent and treat problem drug use among young people; yet primary care and drug abuse services are commonly delivered through separate systems. The Committee encourages NIDA to support health services research on effective ways to educate primary care providers about drug abuse; develop brief behavioral interventions for preventing and treating drug use and related health problems, particularly among adolescents; and develop methods to integrate drug abuse screening, assessment, prevention and treatment into primary health care settings.

Utilizing Knowledge of Genetics and New Technological Advances to Curtail Addiction. The Committee recognizes that not everyone who takes drugs becomes addicted. The Institute is urged to further investigate this phenomenon. Research has shown that genetics plays a critical role in addiction, and that the interplay between genetics and environment is crucial. The science of genetics is at a crucial phase -- technological advances are providing the tools to make significant breakthroughs in disease research. For example, NIDA should take advantage of new high-resolution technology which may help to develop new tailored treatments for smoking.

Combating Nicotine Addiction: The use of tobacco products remains one of the Nation's deadliest addictions. The Committee strongly supports NIDA's continuing efforts to address this major public health problem through its comprehensive research portfolio.

Reducing Health Disparities. The Committee notes that the consequences of drug abuse disproportionately impacts minorities, especially African American populations. The Committee is please to learn that NIDA formed a Subgroup of its Advisory Council to address this important topic. The Committee applauds NIDA for working to strategically

reduce the disproportionate burden of HIV/AIDS among the African American population. Researchers should be encouraged to conduct more studies in this population and to target their studies in geographic areas where HIV/AIDS is high and or growing among African Americans, including in criminal justice settings.

The Clinical Trials Network—Using Infrastructure to Improve Health. The Committee is pleased with the success and progress of NIDA’s National Drug Abuse Treatment Clinical Trials Network (CTN), which was established in 1999 and has grown to include over 17 research centers or nodes spread across the country. The CTN provides an infrastructure to test the effectiveness of new and improved interventions in real-life community settings with diverse populations, enabling an expansion of treatment options for providers and patients. The Committee suggests NIDA develop ways to use the CTN as a vehicle to address emerging public health needs.

Neuroscience Blueprint and Training. The Committee is pleased to hear that NIDA is one of the 15 Institutes and Centers involved in the NIH Blueprint activities. NIDA is encouraged to foster additional training in cross-cutting scientific issues.

Neuroimaging and the Developing Brain. The Committee commends NIDA for applying the rapidly developing neuroimaging technologies to improve research efforts, especially in the treatment arena and its efforts to gain a greater understanding of the human brain’s circuitry underlying drug addiction. The Committee encourages NIDA to utilize neuroimaging technology to improve its understanding of how the brain of children and adolescents develop.

Behavioral Science. The Committee recognizes NIDA’s strong commitment to supporting behavioral science research. The committee encourages NIDA to determine the behavioral, biological, and social factors that affect development and the onset of diseases like addiction.

The Neurobiology of Addiction and Obesity. The Committee encourages NIDA to use its understanding of the neurobiological causes of compulsive drug-taking and apply it to the area of obesity research.

Drug Treatment in Criminal Justice Settings. The Committee is very concerned about the well-known connections between drug use and crime. Research continues to demonstrate that providing treatment to individuals involved in the criminal justice system decreases future drug use and criminal behavior, while improving social functioning. Blending the functions of criminal justice supervision and drug abuse treatment and support services create an opportunity to have an optimal impact on behavior by addressing public health concerns while maintaining public safety. The Committee strongly supports NIDA’s efforts in this area, particularly the Criminal Justice Drug Abuse Treatment Studies (CJ-DATS), a multi-site set of research studies designed to improve outcomes for offenders with substance use disorders by improving the integration of drug abuse treatment with other public health and public safety systems.