

Regional Advisory Board (RAB) of Community Anti-Drug Coalitions

October 2021 Newsletter

October is Medicine Abuse Awareness Month

Did you know that 20 percent of teens say they have taken a prescription drug without having a prescription for it themselves, and close to four percent report misusing over-the-counter (OTC) cough medicine to get high? (CADCA, 9/27/21)

Did you know?

Vapes as strong as 125 cigarettes: Health fears over new craze among young people for super-strength nicotine devices. A new product called Geek Bar Pro, containing more than double the allowed amount of nicotine, is sweeping across the UK, and adolescents are its biggest fans. These super-strength products are illegal for underage sales in Great Britain, but that hasn't stopped testimonials from teen users on social media, especially TikTok. More than 53,000 Geek Bar Pros are sold in the UK every week. Thousands more are sold online. Geek Bars "are so powerful that young users have reported lengthy nosebleeds, coughing up blood, headaches, chest pains, and dizzy spells," according to the *Daily Mail*. (ASAM Weekly, 9/8/21)

Overdose deaths linked to synthetic benzodiazepines rose more than sixfold between 2019 and 2020, according to the CDC. Underground labs are making new synthetic versions of prescription benzodiazepines, or tranquilizers, such as Valium, Xanax and Ativan, HealthDay reports. The CDC also found overdose deaths involving prescription benzodiazepines increased 22%. The report found the number of overdose deaths in 2020 involving prescription benzodiazepines (1,122) still far outnumber those involving synthetic benzodiazepines (316). Synthetic benzodiazepines are structurally similar to prescription tranquilizers, but have unknown side effects and toxicities. (drugfree.org, 9/9/21)

Half of adults ages 20 to 39 with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) have had a substance use disorder, a new study finds. In contrast, 23.6% of young adults without ADHD have had a substance use disorder in their lifetime. Young adults with ADHD and a history of depression or anxiety are especially vulnerable to developing a substance use disorder, researchers at the University of Toronto found. "People with ADHD may be self-medicating with drugs or alcohol to keep their depression under control, and of course, that is a recipe for disaster," lead researcher Esme Fuller-Thomson said. The study found alcohol use disorders were the most common substance use disorders among young adults with ADHD (36%), followed by cannabis use disorders (23%), HealthDay reports. (drugfree.org, 9/9/21)

Researchers recently found genetic liability for cannabis use disorder (CUD) accounted for up to 40% of genetically influenced risk factors, such as body mass index (BMI) and diabetes, for a severe COVID-19 presentation. This association suggested that heavy and problematic cannabis use may represent a modifiable pathway to minimize severe COVID-19. The results of this study point to two outcomes: A predisposition to CUD and severe COVID-19 are due to a common biological mechanism, like inflammatory conditions causing individuals to develop worse symptoms of COVID-19 and/or dependence on cannabis; or that they are associated because of a causal process. (Washington University at St. Louis, 8/17/21)

The Monitoring the Future (MTF) study has been annually tracking substance use among college students and noncollege adults ages 19-22 since 1980. Data for the 2020 survey were collected online from 1,550 college-aged adults between March 20, 2020 through November 30, 2020. A summary of key findings is below.

Marijuana use: Annual marijuana use has continued to increase over the past five years for college students, reaching the highest level in over three-and-a-half decades in 2020. Among college students, 44% reported using marijuana in the past year in 2020, compared to 38% in 2015, representing a significant increase. For young adults not in college, annual marijuana use in 2020 remained at 43% (the same historically high level as recorded in 2018 and 2019). In contrast, similar increases and record highs in marijuana use have not been observed among 12th graders in recent years, with 35% of high school seniors reporting using marijuana in the past year in 2020.

In addition, daily or near daily use of marijuana has continued to rise among college students since 2015, with 8% of college students reporting using marijuana on a daily or near daily basis in 2020 compared to nearly 5% in 2015. In comparison, 13% of same-age adults not in college reported using marijuana on a daily or near daily basis in 2020, consistent with recent years.

Vaping marijuana and nicotine: 12% of college students and 14% of noncollege respondents reporting vaping marijuana in the past 30 days. Similarly, 19% of college students and 24% of noncollege respondents reporting vaping nicotine in the past 30 days compared to 22% and 18% in 2019, and 6% and 8% in 2017, respectively.

Hallucinogen use: Past year use of hallucinogens (including LSD, psilocybin mushrooms, and other psychedelic substances) significantly increased among college students between 2019 and 2020. In 2020, nearly 9% of college students reported the use of any hallucinogens in the past year compared to 5% in 2019. Among noncollege respondents, annual use remained consistent at around 10% compared to 8% in 2020.

Alcohol use: In 2020, college students reported significantly lower alcohol use across numerous measures compared to 2019, with 56% of students reporting alcohol use within the past 30 days (compared to 62% in 2019), and 28% reporting being drunk in the past 30 days (compared to 35% in 2019). In addition, 24% of college students reported binge drinking (consuming five or more alcoholic drinks in a row in the past two weeks) in 2020, compared to 32% in 2019. 49% of noncollege respondents reported alcohol use in the past 30-days, 22% reported being drunk in the past 30 days, and 24% reported binge drinking.

Other highlights from the 2020 survey results on college-age adults include:

Cigarette smoking continued to decline over the past five years to all-time lows over the past four decades in 2020, with 4% of college students reporting having smoked in the past month and 13% of noncollege respondents reporting having smoked in the past month.

Nonmedical use of amphetamines (including misuse of ADHD medications like Adderall®) continued to decline for college students, with a significant five-year decline in annual use to 6.5% in 2020. Though college students have typically had higher prevalence of nonmedical amphetamine use over the past decade, this gap closed in 2020, with 6% of non-college youth reporting past year use.

Prescription opioid misuse continued to decline for college students and noncollege youth, with significant five-year declines in annual use for both groups. In 2020, 1% of college students and 3.5% of same-aged peers not in college reported non-medical use of opioids (narcotic drugs other than heroin) in the past year. (National Institute of Health, 9/8/11)

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