

## **The Facts About Addiction**

Institute for Research, Education and Training in Addiction (IRETA)

April 3, 2003

### **Addictions Treatment Effectiveness**

- Recent studies show that after six months, treatment for alcoholism is successful for 40 to 70 percent of patient/clients; cocaine treatment is successful for 50 to 60 percent and opiate treatment for 50 to 80 percent. *Substance Abuse: The Nation's Number One Health Problem, Schneider Institute for Health Policy Research, Brandeis University, 2001.*
- "Evidence that drug addiction treatments are effective comes from a series of reviews and additional data analyses of more than 600 peer reviewed research articles." *Marwick, C. 1998. Study: Treatment Works for Substance Abuse Offenders, JAMA, 280(143), 1126-1127.*
- Relapse rates for treatment of alcohol, opioids and cocaine are less than those for hypertension and asthma, and equivalent to those of diabetes. Compliance rates for treatment of alcohol, opioids and cocaine are greater than compliance rates for hypertension and asthma. *O'Brien CP, McLellan AT. Myths about the Treatment of Addiction (1996). The Lancet, Volume 347(8996), 237-240.*
- Nearly seventy percent (69%) of patients with addictions-related medical conditions who received health care as part of the addictions treatment program were abstinent 6 months after leaving treatment. *Weisner C., Mertens J., Parthasarathy S., Moore C., Lu Y. "Integrating Primary Medical Care with Addiction Treatment, A Randomized Controlled Trial," JAMA 286(14): 1715-1723.*
- Unlike many other chronic illnesses, in 1999 the National Institute on Drug Abuse published a set of 13 overarching scientifically based "principles" that characterize and can insure effective treatment. *Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment, NIDA, 1999.*
- In a recent study conducted by the Department of Anthropology of the University of Memphis, 63.3% of persons studied reported being abstinent following treatment, and 51.4% remained abstinent at follow up. *Tennessee Outcomes for Alcohol and Drug Service (TOADS), 2002.*

### **Addictions Treatment is Cost Effective**

- For every additional dollar invested in addictions treatment, the taxpayer saves \$7.46 in societal costs (including the cost of incarceration). *Rydell CP & Evensham, SS: RAND, 1994.*
- Substance abuse treatment cuts drug use in half, reduces criminal activity up to 80 percent, and reduces arrests up to 64 percent. *The National Treatment Improvement Evaluation Study (NTIES), Office of Evaluation, Scientific Analysis and Synthesis, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, Substance Abuse and Mental Health*

*Administration, 1997.*

- Recent cost benefit studies consistently find that benefits (i.e., improvements in crime, health and societal functioning) are greater than the costs of substance abuse treatment. *Harwood, H., The Lewin Group, 2002.*
- The societal benefits for treating addicted women are four times greater than the cost of treatment. *Harwood, Fountain, Car others, Gerstein, and Johnson (1998).*
- According to several conservative estimates, every \$1 invested in addiction treatment programs yields a return of between \$4 and \$7 in reduced drug-related crime, criminal justice costs, and theft alone. When savings related to health care are included, total savings can exceed costs by a ratio of 12:1. *Principles of Drug Addiction Treatment: A Research-Based Guide, NIH Publication No. 00-4180, 2000.*
- A major 1994 RAND Corp. study that was commissioned by the US Army found that law enforcement costs 15 times more than drug treatment to achieve the same degree of benefit in reduced cocaine consumption, reduced crime, and reduced violence. *PLNDP and Join Together: A Physician's Guide on How to Advocate for More Effective National and State Drug Policies.*
- Drug abuse treatment has a marked economic impact. A 1997 study published in the *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* found that drug treatment saves \$19,000 per patient in crime-related costs in the year following treatment. Compared with the costs of treatment for addiction (\$2,828 for methadone maintenance, \$8,920 for residential treatment, and \$2,908 for outpatient drug-free treatment) drug treatment can offer immense savings. *PLNDP and Join Together: A Physician's Guide on How to Advocate for More Effective National and State Drug Policies.*
- The overall cost of illicit drug abuse to society is estimated to have been \$160.7 billion in 2000, according to a report released by the Office of National Drug Control Policy. The majority of these costs (69%) were for productivity losses stemming from such things as premature death, illness related to drug abuse, and incarceration. Other costs included health care (9%) and criminal justice/social welfare costs (22%). The total cost of drug abuse to society rose at approximately a 6% annual rate between 1992 and 2000, primarily from increases in productivity losses due to incarceration and illness related to drug abuse. *ONDCP, The Economic Costs of Drug Abuse in the United States, 1992-1998, 2001.*
- On average, the cost of a successful treatment experience is estimated by research to be \$4,600. This cost is the average of all encounters at all levels of acuity. The cost to commercial insurers to provide "adequate" coverage for addiction is about .2% of premium or \$5.11 per employee per year with a return on investment in attendance, work safety, performance of \$4 for every \$1 spent. The return to government for the same investment in public health/welfare ranges between \$7.00 to \$25.00 for each \$1 spent. *Substance Abuse, Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, Facts in a Flash, 2002; George Washington University, 2003.*
- A substance-abuse treatment prenatal program for pregnant drug abusers returns the initial expenditures more than twice over in what is not spent on the costs of increased crime and psychosocial functioning and reduced emergency room visits.

### **Evidence of a Treatment Gap**

- Thirty-eight percent of college students abuse or are dependent on alcohol, according to a survey of students attending colleges and university in 40 states across the U.S. Nearly one-third (32%) of the students were diagnosed as alcohol abusers and 6% were classified with alcohol dependence. However, only 2% of the students diagnosed as alcohol abusers and 6% of students diagnosed as alcohol dependent sought treatment while in college. *Knight, JR, Wechsler H, Meichun K, SeibringM, Weitzman ER, Schuckit MA, Alcohol Abuse and Dependency among US College Students, Journal of Studies on Alcohol 63(3): 263-70, 2002.*
- Of the 6.1 million people needing addictions treatment, 1.1 million people (17.3 percent of the people who needed treatment) received treatment. *2001 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA).*