

# NIDA in the News

News from the Public Information and Liaison Branch

Office of Science Policy and Communications

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Issue #21, January 2009

## Research News

### First-Year College Students Show High Rate of Cannabis Use Disorders



In the first study to measure the prevalence of cannabis use disorders (CUD) among young adults attending college, researchers funded by NIDA found that in a group of students who had used cannabis 5 or more times in the past year, 1 in 10 met the clinical Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)-IV definition for cannabis dependence, and 14.5 percent met the definition for cannabis abuse.

- [Read More...](#)

### Nonmedical Use of Prescription Stimulants Among First-Year College Students

In a large study of first-year college students at a mid-Atlantic university, NIDA-funded researchers found that

## Conferences and Exhibits

NIDA will be exhibiting at the following conferences:

### Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA) National Leadership Form XVIX

February 9-12, 2009  
National Harbor, MD

### National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) 40th Annual Convention

February 24-28, 2009  
Boston, MA

### National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) 57th Annual National Conference

March 19-21, 2009  
New Orleans, LA

### American Medical Student Association (AMSA) 59th Annual Convention

Arlington, VA  
March 12-15, 2009

### National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) 57th Annual National Conference

New Orleans, LA  
March 19-21, 2009

13.5 percent of students they interviewed had used prescription stimulants for nonmedical reasons at least once in their lifetime.

- [Read More...](#)

### **Factors Associated With Detectable HIV Viral Load in a Vulnerable Population**

Many factors that contribute to lower access to and utilization of medical care also correlate with HIV transmission and compromise treatment outcomes in affected individuals. In a study evaluating factors associated with a detectable HIV viral load (an undetectable viral load is associated with longer survival), researchers funded by NIDA found that men who were homeless or reported recently using drugs, particularly methamphetamines, were more than twice as likely to have a detectable viral load compared with those who were not homeless or did not report recent drug use. However, when participants utilized HIV health care services and took their HIV medications, these associations weakened.

- [Read More...](#)

### **Computerized Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy Plus Standard Therapy Helps Reduce Drug Use**

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), a type of behavioral therapy that teaches people how to unlearn unhealthy behaviors and incorporate more effective behaviors and change strategies, has been shown to be effective in the treatment of substance use disorders. CBT, however, is rarely used in clinical practice due to limited resources in most treatment clinics. A new study funded by NIDA indicates that a computer-assisted version of CBT, known as CBT4CBT, can improve treatment outcomes in drug abusers receiving standard counseling.

- [Read More...](#)

### **Computerized Therapy for Opioid Addiction**

#### **American Counseling Association (ACA) Annual Conference and Exposition**

Charlotte, NC  
April 19-23, 2009

\*For more information about these conferences, please contact [Joan Nolan](#).

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## **Employee of the Month**

Congratulations to:

**Ananth Charya**, NIDA's  
September's Employee of the Month

**David Clark**, NIDA's October  
Employee of the Month

Ananth is a Health Program Specialist in the Division of Basic Neuroscience and Behavioral Research. David is a Program Analyst in the Division of Epidemiology Services and Prevention Research. Both were nominated by a co-worker, and both will receive a one-day time off award.

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## Effective at Promoting Abstinence

In a randomized clinical trial testing community reinforcement approach (CRA) therapy for opioid dependence, people receiving a computerized version of the therapy program achieved the same number of weeks of continuous abstinence from opioid and cocaine use as patients who received the CRA intervention from a therapist. CRA therapy seeks to improve patients' satisfaction with aspects of their life outside of drug abuse, including family relationships, social networks, and work, in order to reduce the probability of relapse.

- [Read More...](#)

## News Releases and Media Advisories



### NIDA Announces Call for Submissions for 2009 Avant-Garde Award for Innovative Research in the Treatment of HIV/AIDS in Drug Abusers

As many as three scientists will receive up to \$500,000 each year for five years for potentially groundbreaking approaches to the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS in drug abusers. The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), a component of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), created the Avant-Garde Award to stimulate high-impact research into the link between drug abuse and HIV/AIDS. NIDA is now accepting submissions for its 2009 Avant-Garde awards program.

The Avant-Garde Awards are modeled after the NIH Pioneer Awards, which are granted to scientists of exceptional creativity who propose pioneering, and possibly transformative, approaches to major challenges in biomedical behavioral research

- [Read More...](#)

## Retirement

### Frank Vocci

After 30 years of federal service, Dr. Frank Vocci retired at the end of December 2008 as NIDA's Director of the Division of Pharmacotherapies and Medical Consequences of Drug Abuse (DPMCDA). Dr. Vocci was responsible for instituting research and development activities for medications targeted for the treatment of marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine, nicotine and opiate dependence.

Frank Vocci began his career working in the Clinical Neurophysiology Laboratory in the Department of Neurology at the University of Maryland while pursuing his graduate degree. After receiving his doctoral degree and post-graduate training in pharmacology, Dr. Vocci was employed from 1978 to 1989 by the Food and Drug Administration in the Division of Neuropharmacological Drug Products. In addition to his duties as an FDA reviewer, Dr. Vocci was also a guest researcher in the Clinical Neurosciences Branch of the National Institute on Mental Health, and an ad hoc consultant to the NIDA and the World Health Organization. Beginning in July 1989, he was affiliated with the Medications Development Program (now the DPMCDA) at NIDA where he then served as Director. During his years at NIDA, Dr. Vocci has authored and co-authored over 50 articles in the field of neuropharmacology and substance abuse. He has conducted more than 100 presentations at professional conferences and meetings, and has been interviewed by hundreds of national and local print and broadcast media outlets on behalf of the Institute, including the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Wall Street Journal*, and National Public

## **Downward Trend in Teen Marijuana Use Slows; Prescription Drug Abuse Remains High**

There are signs that the ongoing decline in teen marijuana use in recent years has stalled; however the downward trend in cigarette and alcohol use continues, according to the 2008 Monitoring the Future (MTF) Survey. Results were announced December 11 at a news conference.

The MTF survey indicates that marijuana use among eighth, tenth, and twelfth graders, which has shown a consistent decline since the mid-1990s, appears to have leveled off with 10.9 percent of eighth graders, 23.9 percent of tenth graders, and 32.4 percent of twelfth graders reporting past year use. Heightening the concern over this stabilization in use is the finding that, compared to last year, the proportion of eighth graders who perceived smoking marijuana as harmful and the proportion disapproving of its use have decreased.

- [Read More...](#)

## **Extended Suboxone Treatment Substantially Improves Outcomes for Opioid Addicted Young Adults**

In the first clinical trial of a medication that was used for an extended time to treat opioid addiction in young adults, participants who received counseling and Suboxone (buprenorphine-naloxone) for 12 weeks had substantially better outcomes than those who received the standard treatment of short-term detoxification and counseling. The study, published November 5 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, was conducted through the National Drug Abuse Treatment Clinical Trials Network supported by NIDA. Opioids include heroin, morphine and prescription pain killers such as Vicodin and Oxycontin. Opioid-addicted youth who continued to take Suboxone for 12 weeks were less likely to use opioids, cocaine and marijuana, to inject drugs, or drop out of treatment than those who received short-term detoxification and counseling.

- [Read More...](#)
- [View the Published Article](#)

Radio.

Beginning January 1, 2009, Dr. Vocci became President of the Friends Research Institute (FRI), which promotes health and well-being through research, grants administration, education and treatment. Researchers at FRI receive federal, state, county, and private funding to conduct studies in the fields of substance abuse, health, HIV/AIDS, mental health, and criminal justice.

On a personal note, Dr. Vocci has traveled extensively and over the years has met many interesting people in his travels, including the President of Iceland, the Princess of Thailand, members of the Australian Parliament, movie stars and professional wrestlers. He has two sons – a lawyer and a chef, and two pugs. We wish Frank a heartfelt thanks for his exceptional dedication and service to NIDA and the best of luck in his new career at FRI.

Dr. Dave McCann will serve as Acting Director of DPMCD while a nationwide search is conducted to fill Dr. Vocci's position.

### **Charlie Sharp**

After an extraordinary career at NIDA, Dr. Charlie Sharp announced his retirement on October 31, 2008. Charlie has had a major impact on the field of drug abuse and addiction in many areas. He leaves a lasting influence on the field through his contributions to the training of young scientists and to the development and support of basic AIDS and inhalant research.

Charlie Sharp has a long and distinguished history at NIDA starting with the Institute's inception in 1974. He is currently Special Assistant to the Division

## Hot News

### Monitoring the Future 2008



The 2008 Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey results were unveiled at a news conference held on December 11, 2008 at the JW Marriott Hotel in Washington D.C.. Speakers included NIDA Director Dr. Nora Volkow; John Waters, Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy; Rear Admiral Steven K. Galson, M.D., M.P.H., Acting United States Surgeon General; and Dr. Lloyd Johnson, the principal investigator from the University of Michigan. A constituent briefing for relevant community groups was also held by Dr. Marsha Lopez,



Deputy Branch Chief of NIDA's Division of Epidemiology, Services and Prevention Research. The MTF survey generated a wide variety of media coverage, including stories by major news outlets such as the Associated Press, Reuters, *Wall Street Journal*, Bloomberg News, *Los Angeles Times*, CNN.com, and HealthDay.com

- [Read More...](#)

### Interviews

#### Los Angeles Times

The *Los Angeles Times* interviewed Dr. Nora Volkow about prescription drug abuse among youth. The story was

Director and DBNBR Training Coordinator wherein he directs and oversees the DBNBR NRSA program. Training the next generation of scientists is Charlie's passion – fellowships, traineeships and career development awards have comprised a major focus of his career. For many years, Charlie has developed and overseen DBNBR's research portfolio on HIV/AIDS and neuroimmunology, and as the programs grew to include other program officers, Charlie continued to contribute his wisdom and leadership to the success of these programs. Also, he along with several extramural researchers organized the first conferences in 1989 and 1992 dedicated specifically to an exploration of the role of drugs of abuse in modulating immune function.

Beyond NIDA, Charlie is best known for his expertise in inhalant abuse and he has written important chapters on inhalant abuse for two influential, widely read textbooks. Charlie will continue to participate in DBNBR program activities as a special advisor and consultant. Congratulations Charlie. Thanks for all you have done for NIDA, its programs and its young scientists.

#### Rita Liu

Dr. Rita Liu, Associate Director for Grants Activities, NIDA Office of Extramural Affairs, retired December 1, 2008. Rita was the NIDA Referral Officer and the Referral Liaison to the NIH Center for Scientific Review and was the Scientific Review Officer for NIDA Centers Review Committees, and many complex reviews for RFAs and PA's. She co-chaired the NIDA Neuroscience Consortium Working Group that promotes cutting-edge neuroscience and co-coordinated NIDA activities at the Society for Neuroscience annual meetings. She co-edited the Special Issues of *Neuropharmacology* that in 2004 and

published in print on October 28.

- [View the story](#)

## THE LANCET

Dr. Volkow was interviewed by the *Lancet* for a November 5 article on drug abuse among older adults.

- [View the story](#)



*Marie Claire* magazine interviewed Dr. Volkow for an article on cognitive enhancers (aka "smart drugs"), which appeared on news stands November 24.

- [View the story](#)

## Los Angeles Times

The *Los Angeles Times* also ran an article November 10 entitled, "At Addiction Centers, Longer Treatment Programs Are Proving Key to Ending the Relapse-Rehab Cycle." NIDA's Dr. Lisa Onken was interviewed for the story. The story was re-printed in the *Washington Post* on November 25.

- [View the story](#)

### NIDA a Key Player at Neuroscience 2008



NIDA and four other NIH institutes held a media roundtable for journalists during Neuroscience 2008, the Society for Neuroscience annual meeting. Dr. Nora

2008 commemorated NIDA's thirtieth and thirty-fifth anniversaries.

Prior to joining NIDA in 1988, Rita held faculty positions at Georgetown University and the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences. She trained as a dentist at the National Taiwan University Medical College and received a master's degree in Oral Pathology and Anatomy from Emory University. While working in the neuroanatomy laboratory of Dr. Muriel Ross at the University of Michigan, she chose a research career in neuroscience and received her Ph.D. from Georgetown University. Dr. Liu received a NIDA R01 in pain research and was recruited in 1988 as the SRO for the NIDA Biochemistry Research Committee. She has received numerous honors from NIDA and NIH and most recently the prestigious 2008 biennial J. Michael Morrison Award from the College on Problems of Drug Dependence for outstanding scientific administration.

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## NIDA 2008 Holiday Party

Many thanks to Sue Schlossberg, Dr. Linda Thomas, and the rest of the team for planning this year's wonderful holiday party! It was a festive event with delicious food and terrific music provided by NIDA's very own band, including Dorie Hightower (vocals), Jennifer Elcano (guitar and vocals), Jennifer's husband Tomm Sibert (bass), Curtis Balmer (guitar), Joe Frascella (guitar) and Jim Bjork (sax). A special thank you to Joan

Volkow spoke first before a packed room, highlighting the latest findings in addiction science. She was followed by Dr. Thomas Insel, Director of the National Institute of Mental Health, Dr. Story Landis, Director of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, Dr. Paul Sieving, Director of the National Eye Institute, Dr. Marcelle Morrison-Bogorad, Division of Neuroscience Director at the National Institute on Aging, and Dr. Christopher Platt, Hearing and Balance Program Director of the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. The speakers discussed success stories and new directions in neuroscience research, and journalists were presented with a rare opportunity to meet and interact with several NIH directors at once.



NIDA scientists were in high attendance at the five-day meeting, many presenting their research during NIDA's mini-convention, "Frontiers in Addiction Research." Highlights of the mini-convention were symposia on willpower, epigenetics and brain function, multimodal imaging of neuropathways, and cortical development and substance abuse. NIDA-sponsored mini-symposia at the conference included panels on epigenetics in the nervous system and neuroimaging evidence in drug addiction. NIDA representatives were also available at the NIDA Exhibit Booth to discuss NIDA's research funding opportunities.

## **Publications & Website News**

### **NIDA's New Research Dissemination Center Up and Running**



Deckow and Mike Wright for all of their assistance in picking up the food as always. And an extra thank you to Mike Wright for the great photos.

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PILB wants to hear from you!  
Tell us about your information dissemination activities and upcoming events. Questions or comments? E-mail [media@nida.nih.gov](mailto:media@nida.nih.gov)

NIDA DrugPubs, launched in September, continues to run smoothly, distributing the latest scientific materials and information on drug abuse and addiction to a wide variety of audiences. In October and November, NIDA DrugPubs disseminated more than 219,000 NIDA publications. Treatment practitioners and educators were the most frequent requesters of NIDA publications. The top five publications requested were: *Drugs, Brains, and Behavior: Science of Addiction*; *MJ Facts for Teens*; *MOMKIT*; *Commonly Abused Drug Chart*; and *Selected Prescription Drugs With Potential for Abuse Chart*.

Callers to 1-877-NIDA-NIH or visitors to [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov) can receive scientific information on drug abuse in a timely and effective manner. Order requests can also be emailed to [drugpubs@nida.nih.gov](mailto:drugpubs@nida.nih.gov) or faxed to 240-645-0227.

## **Other News**

### **NIDA PSA Receives Emmy Nomination**



NIDA's "After the Party" bilingual television PSA received an Emmy Award nomination on October 1, 2008 in the National Public Service category. NIDA was the only Federal agency in this year's competition. The other nominees included [ThinkMTV.com](http://ThinkMTV.com), the American Cancer Society, and the Kaiser Family Foundation in partnership with HBO, the NBA and the Global Business Coalition. The PSA, targeted to a Hispanic audience, is designed to educate teens on the link between non-injection drug use, risky behaviors, and HIV transmission. The Annual Public and Community Service Emmy Awards honor television professionals and non-profit groups for programming that advances the common good.

### **Chinatown Screen PSAs**



PILB negotiated a free playing of NIDA's "After the Party" PSA on the jumbo screens in D.C.'s Chinatown. The PSA began running on October 15, 2008, for four weeks – in time for National Latino AIDS Awareness day. The PSA played every 20 minutes in a 24-hour period, seven days a week. In addition, the PSA ran on the small televisions that are located just outside the nearby metro stop.

### **IRP Holds Book Sale**



NIDA IRP held a book and DVD sale November 10-14, 2008, to benefit the Susan G. Komen Foundation and kick off the 2008 Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) season. The sale, a joint effort with the National Institute on Aging (NIA) IRP, raised \$517 in the fight against breast cancer.

### **NIDA Trains Judges on the Science of Addiction**



On November 6 and 7, 2008, NIDA's Dr. Nora Volkow, Dr. Tim Condon and Dr. Frank Vocci helped educate nearly 75 judges on the neuroscience of substance abuse. Their presentations were part of a seminar on "Addiction Treatment Technologies" offered by the Advanced Science and Technology Adjudication Resource (ASTAR) Program – a national program designed to prepare judges to preside over cases involving complex scientific issues.

After Dr. Condon's talk on November 6, which touched on addiction as a brain disease and recommended treatment principles for drug addicts in the criminal justice system, he was presented with ASTAR's "Distinguished Science and Technology Fellow" Award.

### **NIH Summit: The Science of Eliminating Health Disparities**



**NIH SUMMIT: THE SCIENCE OF  
ELIMINATING HEALTH DISPARITIES**  
NATIONAL CENTER ON MINORITY HEALTH AND HEALTH DISPARITIES  
DECEMBER 16-18, 2008

On December 16-18, 2008, the National Institutes of Health hosted the largest national conference ever on health disparities at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center in National Harbor, Maryland. The summit involved all of the NIH Institutes and Centers and brought together more than 3,000 national and international clinicians, researchers, policy leaders, academicians and community leaders to highlight recent progress made in addressing health disparities, and to

redefine the agenda for the health disparities research.

Experts discussed strategies, challenges and progress in diagnosing, treating and preventing some of the most debilitating and devastating diseases and conditions, such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, obesity, heart disease and diabetes that disproportionately burden African Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Hispanics/Latinos, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders and individuals of all races and ethnicities living in poor and medically underserved communities, such as rural areas.

NIDA staffers Dr. Lula Beatty, Dr. Dionne Jones, Dr. Aleta Meyer, and Carmen Rosa moderated sessions for several different meeting tracks, including Health Disparities: Diseases and Conditions; Building Capacity; and Translating Science to Policy and Practice.

### **NIDA Pilot Mentorship Program**

The NIDA Pilot Mentorship Program is now accepting applications. The program is designed to enhance skills, provide professional development and increase knowledge sharing. For the pilot Office of Management and Intramural Research Program, Administrative Management Branch staff are eligible to participate as mentees. All NIDA staff members are encouraged to apply to be a mentor in the program. For more information or to request an application, please email [nidamentorship@nida.nih.gov](mailto:nidamentorship@nida.nih.gov). The deadline for application submissions is January 16, 2009.

### **NIH Merit Award**

Dr. Cathrine Sasek, Office of Science Policy and Communications, was the recipient of an NIH Office of the Director Merit award for her work on the Office of Extramural Research Toolkits Development Workgroup. This workgroup developed NIH's new web sites on animal research issues for grantees and extramural program staff. The workgroup was made up of the animal welfare representatives from all of the NIH Institutes and Centers. The staff web sites contain resources to help NIH staff prevent and respond to threats and incidents against researchers, institutions, and the safety and well-being of animals in their programs. The grantee web site contains information on how to prepare for and manage crises, policy & guidance, grants resources, funding opportunities and training and education.

Although the web sites are completed, NIH plans to continue to take an active and centralized role in working with researchers, particularly those who are targeted by animal rights groups.

- [NIH staff web site](#)
- [Grantee web site](#)

### **The NIDA Networking Project (NNP)**

<http://nnp.drugabuse.gov/>



NIDA's new NNP website encourages drug abuse researchers, practitioners, and policy makers to share information across disciplines, networks and institutions. The one-stop portal provides access to the locations, people, and resources of NIDA-sponsored research networks, including, for example, the National Drug Abuse Treatment Clinical Trials Network (CTN) and the NIDA Genetics Consortium (NGC). The goal is to encourage cooperative scientific discussion and research collaboration to accelerate addiction science. The NNP website includes:

- An interactive U.S. map with locations and contacts for nearly 200 NIDA network sites
- Network missions and descriptions
- Links to 15 network web sites with scientific protocols and papers, as well as, procedural policies and manuals
- NIDA news and events of interest to scientists, clinicians, and addiction specialists
- NNP Colleagues Directory, a searchable database of network participants' expertise and research interests.

For more information on the NNP website, please contact: [Susan David](#), NNP Coordinator, at 301-435-0640.

If you experience issues with the display of this email, [click here to view it in your web browser](#).