UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
RESEARCH STUDY RESULTS

Long-Term Outcomes of Adolescent Substance Use

Thank you for your participation in the current U of MN genetic study of drug and alcohol use. The time and experiences you shared with us in the past greatly contributed to the knowledge that communities, researchers, and clinicians will use to better recognize, understand, and treat substance use disorders, especially in adolescence.

We thought you might find it interesting if we provided you with some of the findings from the past study in which you participated. The summary is below and was taken from a 2008 journal article in the Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment; if you would like a copy of the full publication, please let us know (612-273-9856).

Introduction

- Drug use among American adolescents has become a significant problem in society because of its role in family turmoil, individual health risks, legal consequences, and societal costs such as: 1. violence, 2. higher risk of suicide, 3. delinquency, 4. risky sexual practices, and 5. death/injury from substance-related crashes.

- Prior research has shown that differences between adolescents and adults in substance abuse treatment may affect longer-term outcomes. Compared to adults, adolescents who have gone through treatment are more likely to use more than one drug:
  - over half (51%) of adolescents reported a combination of alcohol and cannabis use as their primary reason for seeking treatment
  - 26% reported cannabis only
  - 9% reported alcohol only

- Adolescents’ typically shorter history of substance use and lower severity of drug-related problems compared to adults may impact their longer-term outcome.
One of the purposes of the study in which you participated led researchers at the U of M to examine the life events of adolescents over a five-year period of time. Questionnaires and interviews were completed at intake, 1-year follow-up, 4-year follow-up, and 5 ½-year follow-up. Your answers allowed researchers to study adolescent alcohol and other drug use and problems resulting from drug and alcohol use over a 5-year period.

**Results and Discussion**

**Results From The 1-year Follow-up Survey:**

- The group of adolescents who **completed treatment** was associated with far superior outcome compared to those who did not complete treatment or receive any treatment at all.
- 53% of those who **completed treatment** reported either abstinence or a minor lapse from either alcohol or marijuana for the 12-months following treatment.
- 15% of those who **did not complete** treatment and 28% percent of those on the **waiting list group**, reported either abstinence or a minor lapse from either alcohol or marijuana for the 12-months following treatment.
- Alcohol was the most common drug used during the 1-year follow-up period, despite cannabis being the preferred drug at intake.

**Results After 5 ½ Years Following Intake:**

- **Improvement** rates for drug use frequency and drug use problems were the **highest** for adolescents **who received treatment** and for those who **did not qualify for treatment**, and were the **lowest** for adolescents who were on a **waiting list** for treatment.
- We also computed the rate of abstinence based on prior year reports across all follow-up points. **Abstinence rates** (defined as no use reported at all follow-up assessments) were **low in all groups**: treatment, 6%, waiting list, 0%.
- Poorer outcome was **highly** associated with minimal or no participation in aftercare.