

# Alcohol and Other Drugs

- Defining drugs and drug abuse (subjectively and objectively)
- Addiction, dependence and habituation
- What makes an alcoholic?
- Treatment of Alcoholics
- Illegal drug use and abuse
- Drug use, crime and violence
- Treatment of drug abuse
- Social Policy: What are the best solutions?

# The Nature of Drug Use and Abuse

- **Drug**-a chemical substance that affects body function, mood, perception, or consciousness
  - Has a potential for misuse
  - May be harmful to the user or society
  - There is a social component to which drugs are labeled as acceptable or dangerous
- **Drug abuse**-the use of unacceptable drugs, and excessive or inappropriate use of acceptable drugs, so that physical, psychological, or social harm can result

# Objective and Subjective Definitions

- Objective-refers to if a drug causes physiological, psychological or social problems for the individual, group or society
- Subjective-how people perceive the consequences of drug use and how their perceptions result in social action concerning drug use (norms, policies, laws, etc...)
- Aspirin-often taken excessively; can cause ulcers, stomach bleeding and other physical reactions
  - Has objective problems, but not really any subjective
- Marijuana-objectively, little evidence of psychological or physiological problems
  - Subjectively, it is interpreted as a dangerous drug, and so made illegal
- Nicotine and alcohol?

# Abuse, Addiction and Dependence

- Drug abuse refers the use of a drug to an extent that causes harm to the user
- **Addiction**-physical dependence on a drug
  - physical dependence occurs when the body has adjusted to the presence of a drug, and will suffer pain, discomfort, or illness if its use is discontinued
- **Psychological dependence**-a condition in which a user needs a drug for the feeling of well-being that it produces
- **Habituation**-psychological dependence on a drug
- **Prevalence**-the extent to which a behavior appears in the population to nay degree at all (pg. 105)

# Alcohol Use and Abuse

- Alcohol is thoroughly integrated into Western culture
  - It fits because not only does it relieve tension, but it also facilitates interpersonal relations, whereas other drug use is usually more private
- Social problems regarding alcohol raise much less concern than the abuse or even use of other drugs
- Problems of alcohol abuse include disorderly behavior, traffic accidents, broken marriages, child abuse and crime
  - Alcohol is implicated in about 40% of all fatal highway accidents in U.S. and about 1/3 of all homicides, drownings and boating deaths
- **Alcoholic**-a person who is addicted to alcohol
  - Uncontrollable need for intoxication
  - Withdrawal symptoms develop like those of narcotics addicts

# Who drinks?

- Many factors contribute to who drinks and who becomes an alcoholic
- Biological-half the risk for alcoholism can be explained by genetics
  - Brain function different in alcoholics than non-alcoholics
- Socioeconomic-drinking most frequent among younger men at higher socioeconomic levels and least frequent among older women at lower socioeconomic levels
- Gender-recent decades have brought a rise in the level of alcoholism among adult women
  - Connected to their rising participation in the labor force
  - Binge drinking 3 times more common among men

# Who drinks?

- Age-drinking tends to diminish with age
  - heavy drinking among men most common at ages 21-30
  - women-most common at ages 31-50
- Religion-Episcopalians drink most heavily, conservative and fundamentalist Protestants drink most lightly
- Cultural influences-Those cultures that incorporate alcohol with meals tend to have fewer problems related to alcoholism
  - Groups where alcohol is seldom used are more likely to have problems
  - Jewish and Italian adults use alcohol since childhood; rate of alcoholism is quite low
  - Irish, childhood drinking less likely; alcoholism rates much higher among Irish than those of Mediterranean descent (up to 7 times more likely according to one study)

# Drinking among Young People

- Rates of alcohol use much higher than nicotine or marijuana among young people
- Drinking construed as rebellion against the adult world, assert independence
- Some authorities believe that strict regulations regarding drinking only make it more appealing
- Binge drinking is relatively common among high school and college students
  - Defined as 5+ drinks at a time for males/4+ drinks at a time for females
  - In a study of college students, 44% admitted at least one episode of heavy drinking in past year

# Alcohol-related Social Problems

- U.S. spends \$130 billion annually on problems of alcoholism
- Health-alcoholics can expect to live 10-12 fewer years
  - Also suffer vitamin deficiencies, liver problems, heart ailments, and even cancer
- Drinking and driving-17,000 traffic fatalities a year where alcohol is involved (pg. 111)
  - Steady declines due to social policies and enforcement
- Alcohol and arrest-alcohol is involved in a significant percentage of homicides and crimes of sex offenders
  - Problems of alcoholism strain law enforcement systems

# Alcohol-related Social Problems

- Effects on Family-children of alcoholics develop more physical and emotional illness
  - Marriage to an alcoholic frequently ends in divorce or desertion
  - **Codependency**-a pattern in which members of a problem drinker's family participate in a pattern of interactions designed to excuse the problematic behavior
  - Characterized by denial, supplying drinks to reduce conflict, ease pain
- Alcoholism and homelessness-only 5% of all alcoholics and problem drinkers are homeless vagrants, most have jobs and families
  - Alcoholism helps produce homelessness; half of urban homeless suffer alcohol addiction

# Treatment of Alcoholism

- Rehabilitation-alcoholism now viewed as an illness; many hospitals now include alcoholism programs
- Alcoholics Anonymous-most successful large-scale program for dealing with alcoholism
  - Drinking like an allergy for alcoholics
  - Seek help from a higher power
  - More than half of motivated members are rehabilitated
- Antabuse-a prescription drug that sensitizes a patient so that consuming even a small amount of alcohol causes uncomfortable physical symptoms, nausea
  - **Detoxification**-a treatment in which an alcoholic is kept off alcohol until none shows in blood samples
  - **Aversion therapy**-a treatment program that employs nausea-producing drugs or electric shock to condition a patient against alcohol

# Treatment of Alcoholism

- Other programs-alcoholics respond to treatment better if they remain in their families and in their jobs than if they are institutionalized
  - Employee assistance programs- seek to treat problem drinkers in the workplace
  - Relatively new, depend on confidentiality, rapport, and exploring underlying psychological problems
- The Johnson Intervention-a “tough love” strategy
  - Alcoholics friends and family confront the individual about the damage that their addiction has caused and what the consequences will be if addict refuses treatment
  - Those subject to Johnson Intervention more likely to enter treatment and complete treatment

# Commonly Abused Drugs

- The most serious social problems associated with illegal drug use have been psychological and physiological addictions, esp. from opiates, cocaine and amphetamines
- Marijuana-like alcohol, is a social drug
  - Little evidence of long-term detriment
  - Little evidence that it leads to the use of stronger drugs
  - As marijuana use has increased somewhat recently among teens, cocaine use by them has decreased
- Cocaine-produces sense of great strength, increased intellect, and can cause paranoid psychoses in large quantities
  - Crack-smoked, highly addictive
  - Crack epidemic peaked in mid 1990s
  - Associated with violence

# Commonly Abused Drugs

- Heroin-initial euphoria, composure, and then lethargy
  - Crime is caused not by the drug but by the lack of it
  - Extremely addicting
  - Typical addict-under 30, urban, health problems, lower life expectancy, malnutrition, hepatitis, and AIDS
  - Most sought-after drug in world markets
- Hallucinogens-(LSD)
  - Not associated with physical or emotional dependence
- Amphetamines-uppers (Ritalin)
  - Many are exposed through medical use
  - Overdose can cause coma, brain damage, or death

# Commonly Abused Drugs

- Ecstasy, Meth, and Designer Drugs-(MDMA, ecstasy)
  - Produced in chemical labs
  - Ecstasy can cause death in high doses
  - Rural areas
- Prescription drug abuse-(Oxycontin, Vicodin, Valium, Xanax)
  - Pain relievers that are opiates among the most addictive drugs and are the most commonly abused drugs
  - Most addicts exposed under a physician's care
  - Since the early 1990s, prescription drug abuse has soared
  - *Polydrug use*-use of multiple drugs at the same time common among prescription drug abusers
  - Which prescription drugs do you think are the most dangerous?

# Who Uses Drugs?

- Acquaintance with a user precedes first drug experience
    - People pass up initial opportunity, but say yes later
  - Among professionals, doctors likely to use drugs and become addicted because of knowledge and access to drugs
  - Generally, there is more drug use and abuse by men than women, except for those with higher incomes (more equal)
- pg. 121

# Who uses Drugs?

- Prevalence of drug use higher among whites than blacks, Hispanics somewhere in the middle
- Number of frequent cocaine users is far higher among whites than among blacks or Hispanics
- For teens, alcohol use occurs at twice the rates of use of any other substance
- Inverse relationship between teens' disapproval of drugs and their use

# Drug Use, Crime and Violence

- The only crimes attributed to use of marijuana are those resulting from its use, possession or transfer
  - Marijuana use and barbiturate use not connected to violence
- Amphetamine users disproportionately involved in violent crime attributable to reactions to the drug
- Heroin and crack associated with many criminal behaviors
  - Shoplifting, burglary, prostitution
- In some communities, crack use has led to some female prostitution and other crimes
- Crack and cocaine dealers rise in violent deaths in urban areas in late 1980s and early 1990s
- 80% of prison inmates have a history of drug abuse
- Early abuse, socialization in criminal peers groups, early financial gain gets people involved in

# Treatment of Drug Abuse

- Drug use does not always follow a course of experimentation to addiction
  - Experimentation, occasional use, regular use, heavy use
- Drug use spreads through the peer group, and may be reversed with a change in setting
- Crack less addicting than nicotine, more than alcohol
  - 9/10 cigarette experimenters get addicted
  - 6/10 crack users get addicted
  - 1/10 alcohol users get addicted

# Treatment of Drug Abuse

- Therapeutic communities-Phoenix House
  - Way to attack problem of high relapse among addicts
  - 1. Assume responsibility
  - 2. Treatment deals with psychological and physical problems
- Methadone maintenance-used to treat heroin addicts
  - Satisfies physical craving, so no withdrawal symptoms
  - Does not produce a high
  - Useful for a short time
- **Narcotics Antagonists**-a substance that negates the effects produced by opiates
  - Counteract the positive sensations produced by heroin
  - Helps overcome psychological addiction to the drug

# The War on Drugs

- U.S. spends about \$30 billion a year (pg. 118)
- Opposes relaxation of sentencing for drug cases and medicinal use
- Vigorous enforcement of laws (Asia and Latin America)
- Started in 1972 under Nixon
- Controversy over its effectiveness in solving drug problems

# The War on Drugs

- 1. Has it gotten harder to obtain drugs?
  - Has done little to combat availability of drugs to young people and has not significantly reduced the price of drugs
- 2. Numbers of arrests, are they justified?
  - 45% of arrests are for marijuana use (700,000 cases)
  - Go to jail or are imprisoned
- 3. Has it changed attitudes towards drugs?
  - Modest success
- Many of our political allies are also involved in the drug trade
  - Afghanistan, Columbia, etc...