Monitoring the Future 2010: Results on Marijuana Use in Teens

According to results of the 2010 “Monitoring the Future” survey, illicit drug use among teens, especially marijuana use, has increased recently. The survey included a total of 46,482 adolescents enrolled in 8th, 10th, and 12th grades in schools in the United States. Students were asked about whether they used a number of drugs and alcohol daily (defined as using at least 20 times in the last 30 days), in the past month, in the past year, and in their lifetimes.

Results of the survey showed that, in comparison to the findings for 2009, daily use of marijuana increased at each grade level by at least 10 percent. Overall rates of daily marijuana use for 2010 were 1.2% for 8th graders in the sample, 3.3% for 10th graders, and 6.1% for 12th graders. These rates compare to the 2009 rates of 1.0% for 8th graders, 2.8% for 10th graders, and 5.2% for 12th graders. Rates of overall illicit drug use in the past year also increased in 2010 to 16% for the 8th grade sample, 30 percent for the 10th graders, and 38 percent for the 12th graders; this increase is thought to be due largely to the increase in marijuana use. Of special note, the past month rate of marijuana use among 12th graders in 2010 was higher than that for past-month cigarette use; 21.4% of 12th graders reported using marijuana in the past month as compared to 19.2% who reported smoking cigarettes in the same period.

Researchers suggest that the increase in teen marijuana use may be related to a decrease in the amount of risk they perceive as related to its use. Historically, drug use has increased when the societal perception of potential dangers related to that use has decreased. Dr. Nora Volkow, Director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), also suggests that the publicity surrounding use of marijuana as a medication has
contributed to the decrease in the perception of the drug as risky or harmful and, consequently, the recent increase in teen marijuana use.

References:


For further information regarding this article, please contact Mary Ellen Lynch, Ph.D., at the Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development Project, Emory University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, 1256 Briarcliff Road, N.E., 320W, Atlanta, Georgia, 30306. You can also phone us at 404-712-9815 or visit our website at http://www.emory.edu/MSACD

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