



# Valley Youth House

## *The Digest*

August 2010 Volume 7, Issue 1



### *Inside this issue:*

Patients May Need More Help Quitting	2
Navy Bans Smoking on Submarines	2
Genetics Linked to Gambling Problems in Both Genders	3
Warm But Watchful Parents are Ideal	3
Relationships: A Protective Factor for Substance Abuse?	4
Religious Teens Seem Less Prone to Alcohol Abuse	4

## Future of Prevention May Be Bright

Fueled in part by national healthcare reform, a quiet revolution is taking place in how the federal government conceives of prevention and funds preventive services, and the upshot could mean more money for programs that take a public-health approach to addiction and mental health problems and less for standalone programs that focus solely on alcohol and other drugs.

"This is the first time in all of the debates over healthcare reform that prevention is being taken somewhat seriously," said Kenneth Warner, Ph.D., Dean of the School of Public Health at the University of Michigan, who chaired an Institute of Medicine panel that released a landmark report on prevention in 2009.

The report, Prevention of Mental, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders Among Young People, concluded that prevention of addiction and mental illness has been proven to be scientifically feasible, but said that only public-health approaches are demonstrably effective.

The report identified five proven approaches to prevention, including:

1. Strengthening families by targeting problems such as substance use or aggressive behavior; teaching effective parenting skills; improving communication; and helping families deal with disruptions (such as divorce) or adversities (such as parental mental illness or poverty).
2. Strengthening individuals by building resilience and skills and improving cognitive processes and behaviors.
3. Preventing specific disorders, such as anxiety or depression, by screening individuals at risk and offering cognitive training or other preventive interventions.
4. Promoting mental health in schools by offering support to children encountering serious stresses; modifying the school environment to promote prosocial behavior; developing students' skills at decision making, self-awareness, and conducting relationships; and targeting violence, aggressive behavior, and substance use.
5. Promoting mental health through health care and community programs by promoting and supporting prosocial behavior, teaching coping skills, and targeting modifiable lifestyle factors that can affect behavior and emotional health, such as sleep, diet, activity and physical fitness, sunshine and light, and television viewing.

<http://www.jointogether.org/news/features/2010/future-of-prevention-funding.html>



## Patients May Need More Help Quitting

**M**any U.S. health professionals fail to offer programs, plans or prescriptions to help patients quit smoking, finds a new study. Researchers surveyed different types of health care providers -- primary care and emergency physicians, psychiatrists, nurses, dentists, dental hygienists and pharmacists -- and found that reasons for failure to follow national guidelines for helping patients kick the habit include the providers' own tobacco use, perceptions of patient attitudes about quitting, a lack of training in smoking-cessation interventions, and a feeling that it was not part of their professional responsibilities.

The University of California, Davis research team found that nearly 99 percent of survey respondents said they ask patients if they smoke and nearly as many warn patients about smoking risks. But far fewer health care professionals actually assist patients in getting the help they need to quit smoking.

For example, 87 percent of registered nurses said they ask if a patient smokes and 65 percent said they advise smokers to quit. But only 25 percent said they help smokers set a quit date. The low rate of assistance was similar among all health professionals, except primary care doctors, who set a quit date for patients 60 percent of the time, according to the report.

Being asked about smoking by more than one type of health care provider improves the likelihood that a patient will quit, the study authors noted.

"We know that [health care] provider advice is one of the simplest and most important things to help a smoker to try to quit and stay quit. Providers are not doing enough. It should be a priority for all health professionals, not just primary care physicians," study author Dr. Elisa K. Tong, of the division of general medicine, said.

[http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory\\_100150.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/news/fullstory_100150.html)



## Navy Bans Smoking on Submarines

**C**iting secondhand-smoke dangers for nonsmoking crew members, the U.S. Navy will impose a smoking ban on its submarine fleet at the end of the year, the New York Times recently reported.

"Recent testing has proven that, despite our atmosphere-purification technology, there are unacceptable levels of secondhand smoke in the atmosphere of a submerged submarine," said Vice Adm. John J. Donnelly, Commander of U.S. Submarine Forces.

Each hunter-killer and nuclear ballistic-missile boat will appoint a smoking-cessation coordinator to help wean sailors off tobacco, with nicotine gum, patches, and other alternatives provided to ease the transition.

Approximately 5,000 of the Navy's 13,000 submariners smoke.

<http://www.jointogether.org/news/headlines/inthenews/2010/navy-bans-smoking-on.html>

## Genetics Linked to Gambling Problems in Both Genders

**G**enetics play an important role in the development of problem gambling in both women and men, a new study has found. Previous research has shown that problem gambling runs in families, with one study reporting that 8 percent of the first-degree relatives of people with gambling disorders had a history of similar problems, compared with 2 percent of relatives of unaffected individuals, according to background information provided in the report.

For the new study, researchers assessed nearly 2,900 pairs of twins in Australia, aged 32 to 43, and found that nearly all of them had gambled at some point, about half had gambled at least once a month and about one-third had gambled at least once a week. About 2.2 percent met the criteria for pathological gambling (3.4 percent of men and 1.2 percent of women), and 12.5 percent had experienced one or more symptoms of pathological gambling (18.2 percent of men and 8.3 percent of women).

While genes were estimated to contribute almost 50 percent to differences between people in terms of gambling disorders, "there was no evidence for shared environmental influences contributing to variation in disordered gambling liability," Wendy S. Slutske, of the University of Missouri-Columbia, and colleagues reported.

The researchers found no evidence of gender differences in the causes of problem gambling.

"This study represents a major step forward in that it establishes for the first time that genes are as important in the etiology of disordered gambling in women as they are in men," the researchers wrote. "In addition to similar relative contributions of genetic vs. environmental factors to variation in liability for disordered gambling, the results suggest that the susceptibility genes contributing to variation in liability for disordered gambling may also overlap considerably in men and women."

The study authors concluded that "the discovery of the specific genes and environments involved in the development of disordered gambling remains an important direction for future research."

<http://consumer.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=639835>

## Warm But Watchful Parents are Ideal

**A**lthough parents may not be able to stop their teen from experimenting with alcohol, a new study suggests that they do have a lot of influence when it comes to preventing their child from developing a heavy drinking habit. Stephen Bahr, a professor in BYU's College of Family, Home and Social Sciences, and colleague John Hoffmann, found that parents who are both warm with their children and rigorous about wanting to know where their teen is spending time, and with whom, are less likely to have teens that engage in heavy drinking (defined as more than five drinks in a row).

By contrast, parents who are more "indulgent" -- namely, less focused on accountability, but high on warmth -- have teens who face a threefold greater risk for heavy drinking. And so-called "strict" parents who are high on accountability, but less warm have double the chance that their teen will drink heavily.

"While parents didn't have much of an effect on whether their teens tried alcohol, they can have a significant impact on the more dangerous type of drinking," Bahr said.

<http://consumer.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=640432>



## Relationships: A Protective Factor for Substance Abuse?

Young adults who are in a romantic relationship in the two years following high school are less likely to engage in heavy drinking or smoke marijuana, new research reveals. The finding builds on past research that had demonstrated that marriage has a similar protective effect relative to drug and alcohol abuse.

"I'm not saying that we should set up dating services," study author Charles Fleming, a research scientist at the University of Washington, said. "But it's something for parents to know and it's something for other people who are working with young adults of this age to know."

The observation stems from a survey, initially launched in the early 1990s, which tracked more than 900 boys and girls beginning in the first or second grade through the two years after high school graduation. The study authors found that while single 19- and 20-year-olds had actually smoked and drank less in high school than their peers, when they reached the cusp of young adulthood, the consumption roles had reversed.

"They catch up and maybe surpass their peers," Fleming said, referring to the finding that at that age, single individuals were actually 40 percent more likely to smoke marijuana than those who still lived alone but were in relationships.

Fleming and his colleagues theorized that partner support might explain the finding, as well as the likelihood that those in relationships are happier and spend less time socializing among substance users in bars or at parties.

However, relationships did not always serve a protective function. The study also revealed that those in a relationship with a heavy drinker or marijuana user were, in fact, more likely -- not less -- to also smoke or drink.

<http://consumer.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=639769>



## Religious Teens Seem Less Prone to Alcohol Abuse

Teenagers who are raised with a religious outlook are less likely to abuse alcohol, even if they are genetically predisposed to do so, new research suggests. Being religious does not, however, appear to prevent such abuse in early adulthood, the study authors found.

"Our study showed that genetic factors could influence problem alcohol use more in nonreligious adolescents than adolescents with a greater religious outlook," study co-author Tanya M.M. Button, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Colorado at Boulder, said. In essence that means, added Button, that "religiosity exerted a strong enough influence over the behavior of religious individuals to override any genetic predisposition. The same was not true for young adults, however, for whom the genetic influence was consistent across levels of religiosity."

The authors' conclusions stem from work with more than 1,400 pairs of male and female twins, both fraternal and identical, during both adolescence and early adulthood.

<http://consumer.healthday.com/Article.asp?AID=640137>

# Valley Youth House



**Address: 531 Main Street  
Bethlehem, Pa 18018**

**Phone: 610.954.9561**

**Fax: 610.954.5944**

**E-Mail: [vyhmain@valleyyouthhouse.org](mailto:vyhmain@valleyyouthhouse.org)**



**Know someone else who might be interested  
in The Digest?**

If you know anyone else who might be interested in receiving The Digest from Valley Youth House, include their name and e-mail address below, and return to Valley Youth House. The e-mail address will not be shared with anyone.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

***We're on the Web!***

***See us at:***

***[www.valleyyouthhouse.org](http://www.valleyyouthhouse.org)***