Masada College 11th September 2012

Student Drug and Alcohol Use

Professor Garry Walter
Chair of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, University of Sydney
Clinical Director, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, Northern Sydney Local Health District
Editor, Australasian Psychiatry
Teenagers today are generally vibrant
lovable
and bright
... but they don’t “know it all”

US National Study on drug use and related beliefs, 1975-2010
Cannabis

- *Does* pose “great risk”
- Major psychiatric and medical problems
- New data is continuously emerging, eg rigorous study published last month:
  - >1000 NZ teens followed up for > 20 yrs
  - Cannabis commenced in adolescents is toxic for the brain
  - Apart from the other problems, such use is associated with a significant loss in IQ
Knowledge is crucial to possess, but alone does not guarantee safe behaviour

• > 1600 adolescents were included in a 2006 national Australian study of beliefs about alcohol and drug use
• > 90% of these agreed that alcohol and cannabis were harmful to mental health

**RESEARCH**

**Beliefs of young people and their parents about the harmfulness of alcohol, cannabis and tobacco for mental disorders**

Dan I Lubman, Leanne Hides and Anthony F Jorm

**ABSTRACT**

Objective: To ascertain the beliefs of young people and their parents about the role of alcohol, tobacco and marijuana in the prevention and treatment of mental disorders.

Design, setting and participants: Between May and August 2006, a national computer-assisted telephone survey was conducted on a representative sample of Australian youths aged 12–25 years. 3746 young people and 2005 of their parents were presented with a case vignette portraying psychosis, depression, depression with
... yet almost 50% of 17 yr old males were consuming at least 7 alcoholic drinks at least once a week

% male teenagers in Victoria who consumed at least 7 glasses of alcohol on any day in the past week (2008)
Rates of illicit drug use are a concern

% teenagers in Victoria who have ever used at least 1 illicit drug in their lifetime (2008)
... and cannabis is *not* always the culprit

% teenagers in Victoria who have ever used at least 1 illicit drug, other than cannabis, in their lifetime (2008)
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Drain de-clogging business

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The Masada Community has developed a new Zap-it

• A set of 5 principles and actions to address student alcohol and drug use
Zap-it

(Zero tolerance) Masada takes a stand of zero tolerance in Years 7-10 inclusive.
(Avoidance) Alcohol and illicit drugs adversely affect the developing brain. All teenagers up until the age of 16 should avoid alcohol.
Parents have a duty to safeguard the health of their children and other children in their care. This includes a pledge for safety (alongside the teen’s “counter-pledge” for safety).
Parents’ pledge

• We agree to pick you up anytime, day or night, from anywhere, for any reason, to give you a safe ride home.
• We agree not to be critical of any behaviour that leads to the call – just call and we will come.
• If need be, we will give your friends a lift home.
• We agree to discuss any matters arising from our pledge in a calm and rational manner.
Teens’ counter-pledge

• We agree not to drive while affected by alcohol or otherwise intoxicated, or while tired or otherwise affected.
• We agree to call you for assistance, regardless of the time, place or reason.
• We agree not to accept a lift from anyone we suspect of being intoxicated, tired or an inadequate driver.
Pledge and counter-pledge for safety

Parents’ Pledge

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Informed parents are more prepared to have effective conversations with their children around drugs and alcohol.
(Teamwork) Parents, the school and the community are best able to provide effective guidance and boundaries when they work together and share common values.
Zap-it

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(Pledge) Parents have a duty to safeguard the health of their children and other children in their care. This includes a pledge for safety (alongside the teen’s “counter pledge” for safety).

(Informed) Informed parents are more prepared to have effective conversations with their children around drugs and alcohol.

(Teamwork) Parents, the school and the community are best able to provide effective guidance and boundaries when they work together and share common values.
Key points

• A set of principles and actions
• Requires commitment and effort to be effective
• Much at stake
Elephant in the room
Parental drug and alcohol use

• We must frankly assess our own beliefs and practices in relation to drugs and alcohol, for two reasons:
  – For our own health
  – Because parental beliefs and practices impact on the beliefs and practices of their children
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drug</th>
<th>Approval of regular drug use by adults</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Ecstasy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meth/amphetamines(^{(b)})</td>
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<td>Heroin</td>
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Thank you