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Dramatic Increase in National Treatment Admissions for Methamphetamine Coincides with Increase in Criminal Justice Referrals

The number of national treatment admissions reporting methamphetamine as the primary substance of abuse increased dramatically from 1992 to 2004, according to data from the Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS). In 1992, 14,570 treatment admissions reported methamphetamine as the primary substance of abuse (comprising 1% of all admissions), compared to 129,079 in 2004 (7% of all admissions).* At the same time, the proportion of methamphetamine treatment admissions that were referred by the criminal justice system also increased, from 38% to 51%. Referrals from individuals (including self-referrals) decreased over this period (from 34% to 24%) as did those from substance abuse care providers (from 9% to 5%; data not shown). Caution should be used in utilizing treatment admissions data as an indicator of use or dependence since treatment admissions may also be influenced by changes in law enforcement and sentencing practices as well as changes in legislation which divert drug offenders to treatment.

NOTES: TEDS provides information on the demographic and substance abuse characteristics of admissions to treatment for abuse of alcohol and drugs in facilities that report to individual State administrative databases. The category "Other Referrals" includes referrals from individuals (including self-referrals), substance abuse providers, other health care providers, schools, employers, and other community sources.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Data Archive, online analysis of the concatenated 1992-2002 TEDS data set, conducted 6/2/2006. The SAMHDA is available online at <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/SAMHDA>.

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Illicit Drug Use by U.S. High School Students Declining

The percentage of U.S. high school students reporting lifetime use of many illicit drugs has declined in recent years, according to data from the national Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The percentage of students in grades 9 through 12 reporting lifetime use of marijuana has declined from a peak of 47% in 1999 to 38% in 2005. Methamphetamine use has also declined, from 9% when it was first measured in 1999 to 6% in 2005. The first half of this decade has also seen declines in cocaine and inhalant use while steroid use has only recently declined (from 6% in 2003 to 4% in 2005). Heroin use has remained stable at around 3%. These results are consistent with those of other national surveys of youths, such as the Monitoring the Future survey and the National Survey on Drug Use and Health.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2005," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 55 (SS-5), June 9, 2006. Available online at <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>.

CESAR FAX: June 19, 2006 (Vol. 15, Issue 24)

Despite Declines in Early Initiation Rates, Many U.S. High School Students Still Drink or Smoke Before Age 13

While early initiation rates have declined since 1995, a considerable proportion of U.S. high school students continue to report using alcohol and cigarettes for the first time before age 13. Recently released data from the national Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) show that 26% of U.S. high school students reported drinking more than a few sips of alcohol and 16% reported smoking a whole cigarette before age 13 in 2005, compared to 32% and 25%, respectively, in 1995. The percentage of students who reported trying marijuana before age 13 has remained stable at 8% to 9%. Previous studies have found a relationship between early drug initiation and drug dependence (see *CESAR FAX*, Volume 13, Issue 45 and Volume 9, Issue 38; available online at www.cesar.umd.edu).

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2005," *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 55 (SS-5), June 9, 2006. Available online at <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/index.htm>.

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Prescription Still Not Required: Study Finds Controlled Prescription Drugs Continue to Be Available Online

The majority of web sites selling controlled prescription drugs still do not require prescriptions, according to a study tracking the availability of such drugs on the internet since 2004. One week each year, the number of internet sites dispensing opioid, depressant, and stimulant prescription drugs were documented and dispensing patterns were identified. In 2006, there were 185 internet sites selling such drugs, compared to 160 in 2005 and 157 in 2004. Of the internet sites selling controlled prescription drugs in 2006, 165 (89%) did not require a valid prescription, only slightly less than in previous years. Only 20 sites (11%) required that a prescription be faxed or mailed or that the patient's doctor be contacted for the prescription. There was no evidence of any mechanisms in place to block children from purchasing prescription drugs online. As in past years (see *CESAR FAX*, Volume 13, Issue 17), benzodiazepines such as Xanax® and Valium® were the drugs most frequently offered on the internet, followed by pain killers (e.g. fentanyl, hydrocodone). Among the author's recommendations are that federal law be clarified to "prohibit sale or purchase of controlled prescription drugs on the Internet without an original copy of a prescription issued by a licensed, DEA-certified physician" (p. 7).

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Cone, E.J. "Ephemeral Profiles of Prescription Drug and Formulation Tampering: Evolving Pseudoscience on the Internet," *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 83 (S1):S31-S39, 2006. For more information, contact Edward Cone at edward.cone@comcast.net.

