



National Institute on Drug Abuse
<http://www.drugabuse.gov/>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, November 6, 2009

NIDA Contacts: Jeff Levine
Stephanie Older
301-443-6245
media@nida.nih.gov

NIDA Launches New Substance Abuse Resources to Help Fill Gaps in Medical Education
First Curriculum Offerings from NIDA Centers of Excellence for Physician Information

The rigors of medical training sharpen a doctor's ability to diagnose and treat a wide variety of human afflictions. However, drug abuse and addiction are often insufficiently covered in medical school curricula, despite the fact that drug use affects a wide range of health conditions and drug abuse and addiction are themselves major public health issues.

To improve drug abuse and addiction training of future physicians, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), part of the National Institutes of Health, today unveiled a series of new teaching tools, through its Centers of Excellence for Physician Information Program (NIDA CoEs), at the Association of American Medical Colleges 2009 Annual Meeting's "Innovations in Medical Education" Exhibit in Boston.

The new NIDA CoE curriculum resources provide scientifically accurate information on substance abuse, addiction and its consequences to help meet the educational needs of medical students, residents and medical school faculty. The first seven curriculum resources include lectures, problem-based case studies, a faculty workshop, and a web module, any of which can be incorporated into existing medical curricula.

"Physicians can be the first line of defense against substance abuse and addiction, but they need the resources and the training," said NIDA Director Dr. Nora D. Volkow. "Our long term goal is for doctors to incorporate screening for drug use into routine practice like they currently screen for other diseases; to help patients that are abusing to stop; and to refer more serious cases to specialized treatment."

Three themes have emerged in this first wave of CoE offerings: the importance of communication in the doctor-patient relationship, particularly around sensitive issues; the recognition that substance abuse may play an integral role in many disorders physicians treat, even when not the presenting condition; and the crucial part physicians can play in both

identifying substance abuse in their patients and reducing their risk of developing a substance use disorder.

For example, several CoE resources address prescription drug abuse among chronic pain patients, which presents special issues for physicians, who must balance adequate treatment with the risks of addiction.

“Our goal is to improve the quality of pain treatment and the safety of prescribing opioids by increasing the knowledge and skills of medical providers early in the educational process,” emphasized Dr. Jeffrey Baxter of the University of Massachusetts Medical School, developer of one of the CoE resources.

By pairing substance abuse expertise with innovations in medical education, these curriculum adjuncts can enhance substance abuse medical education, help to remove the stigma associated with substance abuse, and ultimately improve patient care.

The NIDA CoE program was created through a partnership with the American Medical Association’s medical education research collaborative, Innovative Strategies for Transforming the Education of Physicians and includes the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Tufts University School of Medicine, Boston University School of Medicine, the Harvard Medical School/Cambridge Health Alliance, the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences, Creighton University School of Medicine, the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine and Drexel University College of Medicine.

The NIDA CoE program is part of **NIDAMED**--NIDA’s ongoing commitment to the medical community to provide scientifically accurate and useful resources for addressing substance abuse in their patients. **NIDAMED** offers a variety of tools, including an online interactive screening tool to help doctors accurately assess their patient’s substance use.

More information on the NIDA CoE resources can be found at: www.drugabuse.gov/coe. Information on the **NIDAMED** program can be found at: www.nida.nih.gov/nidamed.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse is a component of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIDA supports most of the world’s research on the health aspects of drug abuse and addiction. The Institute carries out a large variety of programs to inform policy and improve practice. Fact sheets on the health effects of drugs of abuse and information on NIDA research and other activities can be found on the NIDA home page at www.drugabuse.gov. To order publications in English or Spanish, call NIDA’s new DrugPubs research dissemination center at 1-877-NIDA-NIH or 240-645-0228 (TDD) or fax or email requests to 240-645-0227 or drugpubs@nida.nih.gov. Online ordering is available at <http://drugpubs.drugabuse.gov>. NIDA’s new media guide can be found at <http://drugabuse.gov/mediaguide>.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) — *The Nation’s Medical Research Agency* — includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary Federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit www.nih.gov.

#####