



Preface
Addiction medicine



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Guest Editors

Call it the “problem that won’t go away.” Call it one of the biggest social and medical issues of our day. Call it every parent’s and every pediatrician’s nightmare. Data developed by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, the Center for Substance Abuse, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration or the PRIDE (Parents’ Resource Institute for Drug Education) all paint the same picture. Children, adolescents, and young adults continue to use tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs at terrifyingly high rates. Smoking rates may go down while smokeless tobacco use goes up. We see decreases in heroin use but club drug use goes through the roof. Cocaine use goes down, but the use of crack cocaine goes up. While this is “old news” to many, drug use among teens continues to represent an immense public health problem and ruins the lives of countless teens and their families.

This issue of *Pediatric Clinics of North America* once again devotes itself to the problem of Addiction Medicine as it pertains to children and adolescents. As primary care providers, your editors have attempted to look at this issue from that unique standpoint. The concept of risk behavior has taken firm hold, and we now view the choice to use drugs as just one of many bad choices young people make. The role of the media in legitimizing and even promoting the use of tobacco and alcohol has become clear. New clinically valid treatments are available for tobacco addiction. The distressingly high association between substance abuse disorders and other mental health problems has become important for not only the addictions specialist but the general psychiatrist as well. The “rave” scene and intense use of dangerous semi-synthetic amphetamines is a new and frightening phenomenon affecting even young teens. Athletes are finding new substances and new ways to use performance-enhancing drugs. Marijuana use remains rampant, with what appears to be increasing

societal resignation despite clearly increased potency of the plant matter and irrefutable evidence of its addictiveness.

The role of the pediatrician has truly become clearer. Yet it seems so many of us are hesitant to handle the issue of substance abuse. It is our hope that this volume will address the five commonly identified barriers: lack of expertise about tobacco, alcohol and other drugs (TAOD); lack of familiarity with family, social and individual factors which increase the likelihood of use; lack of confidence in recognizing signs and symptoms suggestive of TAOD use; pessimism about the outcomes of treatment for the disease; and finally, lack of resources to which to refer for evaluation and treatment.

We have identified some of the brightest and most authoritative experts among our colleagues to help address the issue. Our goal is simple: we want this volume to represent an “easy read” which a pediatrician can read cover-to-cover and, in a couple of hours, gain the confidence to say not only “I *must* do TAOD just like I have to do bike helmets and infant nutrition” but also “I *can* do this — because I know what to look for and what to do if I encounter a problem.”

The editors thank Carin Davis at WB Saunders for her constant support and encouragement. We also express our gratitude to those special people in our lives who have made our commitment to the problem of adolescent addictions so urgent and so personal. It is to them that we truly dedicate this effort.

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