

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland at College Park

Heroin Attracting Younger, Suburban Inhalers

According to the Spring 1995 *Pulse Check*, while older, inner-city residents continue to be the main users of heroin, an increase in the number of younger, suburban users has been reported in some areas. "Reports from New York, Colorado, New Jersey, Connecticut, California, and Georgia indicate heroin is being purchased by younger users" and "in New York there is a reported increase . . . in the number of suburban users coming into the city to buy heroin" (p. 7).

Several factors seem to be attracting new users to heroin. Availability of the drug is high, and many crack and cocaine dealers are switching to heroin sales. In addition, heroin is relatively inexpensive--the price across the country remains consistently at \$3, \$10, and \$20 per bag or balloon. The current purity of heroin "is reminiscent of heroin found on the streets during the heroin epidemic of the late 1960's," ranging from 40% to 80% in most areas (p. 8). Recent heroin seizures by the Maryland State Police yielded heroin which was 75-80% pure.

The availability of high-purity heroin has resulted in an increase in inhalation as a mode of ingestion, particularly in the Northeast. In New York, "small glassine envelopes in which heroin is packaged litter many areas where high levels of heroin trafficking occur, indicating that users buy the product, inhale it immediately, and dispose of the container on site" (p. 7). Treatment providers in the Northeast report that equal numbers of heroin inhalers and injectors are entering treatment. The availability of inhalable heroin attracts many new users because it is less stigmatizing than injection and there is no risk of HIV infection.

Pulse Check is released quarterly by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) (see CESAR FAX Volume 4, Issue 12, for more information). To receive a complimentary copy of the Spring 1995 report, please contact the ONDCP Drugs and Crime Clearinghouse at 800-666-3332.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from data from the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), *Pulse Check: National Trends in Drug Abuse, Spring 1995*.

MARYLAND TO LAUNCH FIRST STATE WIDE PULSE CHECK!

CESAR is preparing to institute a statewide Pulse Check for Maryland, modeled after the national ONDCP Pulse Check. We are currently searching for researchers, epidemiologists, ethnographers, treatment providers, law enforcement officials, grass-roots organizers, and individuals working in a community setting who are willing to periodically discuss local drug trends over the telephone. If you would like to participate or would like to nominate someone, please contact Clare Mundell at CESAR, 301-403-8329.

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