

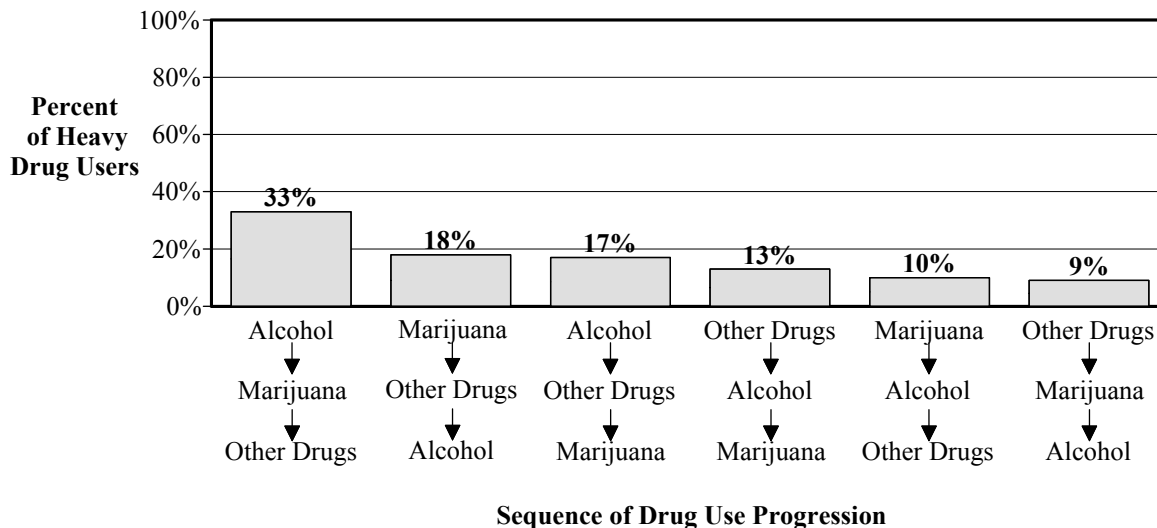
## A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

### *Gateway Sequence of Drug Use May Not Apply to Heavy Drug Users*

Previous studies have reported that between 75% and 93% of drug users followed a typical “gateway” sequence of drug use--alcohol, followed by marijuana, followed by other illicit drugs.\* However, a recent study suggests that heavy drug users--those whose drug use occupies a substantial portion of their daily behavior--are less likely to follow this sequence of drug progression. A secondary analysis of data collected from two ethnographic studies of heavy drug users in New York City between 1984 and 1987 revealed that only 33% of the heavy drug users followed the conventional progression of drug use. According to the authors, these findings suggest that drug “sequencing patterns may vary markedly, depending on the overall drug involvement of the sample under study” (p. 193). Thus, “drug abuse prevention messages based on the gateway model may be least effective for a segment of the population that potentially will abuse drugs the most” (p. 194).

**Sequence of Drug Use Progression by Heavy Drug Users,  
New York City, 1984-1987**  
(N=285)



\*e.g., J. Donovan and R. Jessor, “Problem Drinking and the Dimension of Involvement With Drugs: A Guttman Scalogram Analysis of Adolescent Drug Use,” *American Journal of Public Health*, 1983, 73:543-552; D. Kandel and K. Yamaguchi, “From Beer to Crack: Developmental Patterns of Drug Involvement,” *American Journal of Public Health*, 1993, 83:851-855.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from data from Mary Ellen Mackesy-Amiti, Michael Fendrich, and Paul Goldstein, “Sequence of Drug Use Among Serious Drug Users: Typical vs. Atypical Progression,” *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*, 1997, 45:185-196. For more information, contact Michael Fendrich at 312-413-1084 or Paul Goldstein at 312-996-6038.

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