

Addiction and the Specific Appeal of NPS

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Context for NPS

- Modern drug epidemic began in the late 1960s
- Recent explosion of drug overdose deaths – leading cause of death of Americans under age 50

The Root of the Drug Epidemic

- Brain biology – chemical super-stimulation of brain reward
- Unique vulnerability is inescapable and permanent
- Leadership of National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

The Drug Epidemic Builds on Alcohol and Nicotine

- A thousand years of alcohol
- A century of nicotine
- These drugs kill and sicken more people not because they are more toxic but because they are legal

Leading Researchers at the National Institute on Drug Abuse

- “...the effects of a drug (legal or illegal) on individual health are determined not only by its pharmacologic properties but also by its **availability and social acceptability**.
- In this respect, legal drugs (alcohol and tobacco) offer a sobering perspective, accounting for the greatest burden of disease associated with drugs not because they are more dangerous than illegal drugs but because their **legal status allows for more widespread exposure.**”

Drug Users

- Adolescent vulnerability
 - 90% of adults with substance use disorders began using during adolescence
- Tenacity of addiction: relapse defines the disorder
- The central addiction treatment challenge is the hijacked brain

Drug Suppliers

- Now part of a growing global, sophisticated business
- Offer many more drugs, at higher potency, more diverse routes of administration – at lower cost and greater convenience
- Models of pizza and Amazon delivery

The Drugs

- Began as a few agricultural products
- Evolved into a myriad of synthetics
- Mimicked the evolution of pharmaceutical medicines

What is Unique about the NPS?

- New chemicals and often new distribution
- More of them – an expanding cascade
- More acutely and unpredictably toxic
- Treatment of toxicity is purely supportive
- Impossible to detect – interdiction and drug tests

Cultural Context of the Drug Epidemic

- Illegal drug users were often economically marginalized and from urban minorities – now across all communities
- Drug use is seen as an acceptable alternative behavior – an okay, if sometimes risky, choice

The Public Health Challenge

- Legalization vs. prohibition – an illuminating but false dichotomy
- Use of chemicals to super-stimulate brain reward for fun and for “self-medication”
- How to deal with Recreational Pharmacology – the biggest challenge today

The New Frontier

- Vast experiment in the stimulation of brain reward
 - 94% of Americans with a substance use disorder do not think they have a problem and do not want treatment
- Beyond the reach of Institutional Review Boards, National Institutes of Health and the Food and Drug Administration
- Drug users' choice: \$100 billion spent each year for brain stimulation and virtually nothing for treatment

Back to Legal Drugs

- We are still learning the hard way about alcohol and nicotine through bitter controversies
- Very SLOW – small steps over decades
- Terrible costs in life and sickness – in areas of safety, education, productivity and family life

Do We Take the Path of Alcohol or Path of Nicotine for New Drugs?

- Differing roles of regulation and the criminal justice system
- False hope of the repeal of Prohibition in 1933 which virtually ended bootlegging
- Example from Colorado: legal marijuana grows illegal marijuana industry
- Want an easy problem with an easy answer? Don't go near this one!

Final Thought

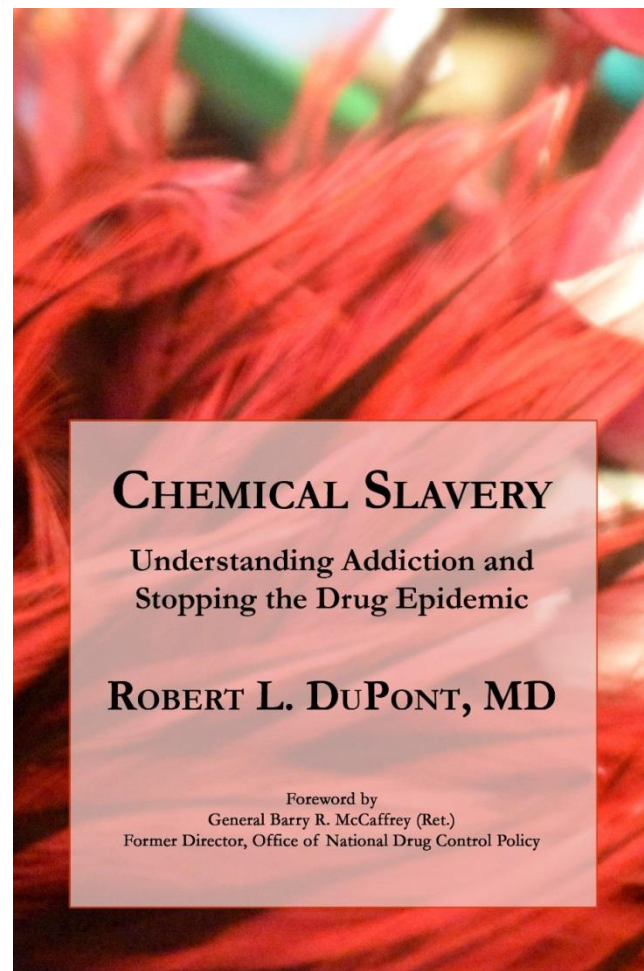
- The prevalence of NPS is relatively small right now – but NPS is the future of the very big global drug epidemic

Thank You!

Chemical Slavery

Understanding Addiction and Stopping the Drug Epidemic

- Published August 2018
- Available at Amazon in paperback and Kindle



Institute for Behavior and Health, Inc.

- IBH is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization that develops strategies to reduce drug use



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