SESSION II

DRUGS IN SOCIETY AND IN VEHICLE OPERATION

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Upon successfully completing this session the student will be able to:

- Define the term "drug" in the context of this course.
- Name the seven major categories of drugs that are relevant to the Drug Evaluation and Classification program.
- State in approximate, quantitative terms the incidence of drug use among various segments of the American public.
- State in approximate, quantitative terms the incidence of drug involvement in motor vehicle crashes and other driving incidents.
- Correctly answer the "topics for study" questions at the end of this session.

A. Definition and Categories of Drugs

The word "drug" means many things to many people. The word is used in a number of different ways, by different people, to convey some very different ideas.

For purposes of this training, a simple, enforcement-oriented definition is needed:

A drug is any substance that, when taken into the human body, can impair the ability of the person to operate a vehicle safely.

This definition is adapted from the California Vehicle Code, and reflects the traffic safety orientation of this training program.

It is worth noting that this definition excludes many substances that physicians and others would not consider "drugs". For example, nicotine (cigarettes) and acetyl salicylic acid (aspirin) would <u>not</u> be considered "drugs" for purposes of this training. Similarly, this definition <u>includes</u> as "drugs" many substances that physicians wouldn't ordinarily think of when they hear the word. Model airplane glue, for example, is a "drug" for purposes of this training.

Under this definition, there are seven broad categories of drugs.

Central Nervous System Depressants

<u>Examples</u>

- Alcohol
- Barbiturates
- Anti-Depressants
- Anti-Anxiety Tranquilizers

Central Nervous System Stimulants

<u>Examples</u>

- Cocaine
- Amphetamines
- Methamphetamine
- Ritalin

Hallucinogens

<u>Examples</u>

- LSD
- MDMA (Ecstasy)
- Psilocybin
- Peyote

Dissociative Anesthetics

Examples

PCP (Phenyl Cyclohexyl Piperdine)
Ketamine
Dextromethorphan

Narcotic Analgesics

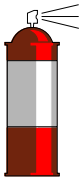
Examples

Heroin
Codeine
Demerol
Methadone
OxyContin

Inhalants

Examples

Glue
Gasoline
Aerosols
Nitrous Oxide
Amyl Nitrite



Cannabis

This category includes the various forms and products of Cannabis plants (e.g. marijuana, hashish, Marinol, etc.)

Each category produces a different set of effects on the human mind and body. Each category exhibits different signs of drug influence, signs which come to light in the Drug Evaluation and Classification examinations. Each category also includes drugs that are widely abused.

One fact that is abundantly clear is that many drug users don't stick with only one substance, but instead routinely ingest more than one drug category. This behavior is called "polydrug" use (the prefix "poly" derives from the Greek word for "many"). Some commonly abused combinations of drugs include:

- Alcohol and virtually any other drug (for example, out of 173 drivers arrested by LAPD on suspicion of being under the influence of drugs, 81 (or 47%) had consumed alcohol and some other drug).

- Marijuana and PCP (A common way of ingesting PCP is to sprinkle it on a marijuana cigarette and smoke it. The user then automatically ingests both PCP and Cannabis.)

- Cocaine and Heroin (This combination has its own "street name". It is commonly called a "speedball".)

- Heroin and Amphetamine (This combination is sometimes called a "poor man's speedball".)
- Heroin and PCP (Sometimes called a "fireball".)
- "Crack" Cocaine and PCP (Sometimes called "space base".)
- "Crack" cocaine and marijuana (Sometimes called "primo".)
- "Crack" and Methamphetamine (Sometimes called "croak".)

The practice of polydrug use is so common that a DRE should expect to encounter many subjects who are under the influence of more than one category of drugs. Indeed, at some times and places, polydrug use may be more common than single drug use.

B. Incidence and Characteristics of Drug Use in America

Estimates of the number of American drug users vary widely and are difficult to pinpoint with any accuracy. It is known that one drug, alcohol, is occasionally used by at least a majority of adults in this country. Despite the fact that almost all of the alcohol consumed in this country is legally manufactured (and taxed) under fairly close governmental scrutiny, experts disagree as to how many people abuse alcohol, how much they consume, how frequently, etc. Knowledge of consumption patterns of other drugs is even less exact, since these drugs often are produced and sold illegally.

Nevertheless, virtually all experts agree that millions of Americans use drugs other than alcohol. The 2008 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) reported by the Substance Abuse of Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) obtained survey information on numerous categories of drugs; marijuana, cocaine, heroin, hallucinogens, inhalants and non-medical use of prescription drugs. The results confirmed that a large percentage of the American population use drugs other than alcohol. Marijuana was the most commonly used illicit drug in 2008 with 15.2 million current users (6.2 percent of the population).

In 2008, 6.2 million people were users of psychotherapeutic drugs taken non-medically.

The NSDUH survey also reported that an estimated 1.9 million persons were current Cocaine users.

Hallucinogens were used in the past month by 1.1 million persons including 555,000 users of Ecstasy. Of the non-medical prescription drug users, an estimated 4.7 million abused pain relievers, 1.8 million abused tranquilizers, 1.2 million abused stimulants and 300,000 abused sedative medications.

C. Incidence of Drug Impaired Driving

Accurate data on the frequency with which people drive while under the influence of drugs is very hard to come by. First of all, many impaired drivers are never detected. Secondly, since many drug users also drink alcohol, when they are stopped for impaired driving they may be arrested (and tabulated in statistics) as alcohol impaired drivers only. Thirdly, when they are involved in crashes, they may not be tested for drugs other than alcohol.

Nevertheless, some limited studies have been conducted that suggest drug impaired driving is a problem of significant proportions.

(1) A study was conducted in California of young (15-34 years old) male drivers killed in crashes during 1982 and 1983. This study covered 440 such drivers. More than half (51%) were found to have some drug or drugs other than alcohol in them. The most prevalent drug other than alcohol was cannabis, which was found in 37% of these young dead drivers. Nearly one-third of these 440 deceased drivers (30%) had alcohol and cannabis in them.

(2) In what is probably one of the most comprehensive studies of this kind conducted by the University of Tennessee Medical Center who analyzed the urine samples of crash-injured drivers for a broad spectrum of drugs, and found that 40 percent had evidence of drugs other than alcohol.

(3) The U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reported that a study of fatally injured drivers from seven states showed that alcohol was present in more than 50% of the drivers and other drugs were present in 18% of the drivers.

(4) The 2008 NSDUH, study reported that an estimated 10 million persons aged 12 or older reported driving under the influence of an illicit drug in the past year.

(5) The NHTSA 2007 National Roadside Survey of Alcohol and Drug Use by Drivers indicated that 16.3% of nighttime drivers tested positive for drugs.

Topics for Study

1. What does the term "drug" mean, as used in this course?

2. What are the seven categories of drugs? To which category does alcohol belong? To which category does cocaine belong?

3. What does "polydrug use" mean?

4. What is a "Speedball"? What is "Space Base"?

5. In the 2007 National Roadside Survey of Alcohol and Drug Use by Drivers Study, using both blood tests and oral fluids, what percentage of nighttime drivers tested positive for drugs?