The present study examined the effectiveness of a substance abuse prevention program in preventing tobacco and alcohol use among elementary school students in grades 3 through 6. The prevention program teaches social resistance skills and general personal and social competence skills. Rates of substance use behavior, attitudes, knowledge, normative expectations, and related variables were examined among students (N = 1090) from 20 schools that were randomly assigned to either receive the prevention program (9 schools, n = 426) or serve as a control group (11 schools, n = 664). Data were analyzed at both the individual-level and school-level. Individual-level analyses controlling for gender, race, and family structure showed that intervention students reported less smoking in the past year, higher anti-drinking attitudes, increased substance use knowledge and skills-related knowledge, lower normative expectations for smoking and alcohol use, and higher self-esteem at the posttest assessment, relative to control students. School-level analyses showed that annual prevalence rate was 61% lower for
smoking and 25% lower for alcohol use at the posttest assessment in schools that received the prevention program when compared with control schools. In addition, mean self-esteem scores were higher in intervention schools at the posttest assessment relative to control schools. Findings indicate that a school-based substance abuse prevention approach previously found to be effective among middle school students is also effective for elementary school students.

KEYWORDS: Smoking, alcohol, elementary school, prevention, children

Gender Differences in Dependence Symptoms and Psychiatric Severity in Adolescents with Substance Use Disorders

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One hundred adolescent inpatients (42% female) seeking treatment for a substance use disorder (SUD) were compared by gender on several substance use and psychiatric variables. Adolescents were assessed with the Comprehensive Addiction Severity Index (C-ASI) and other standardized assessment instruments. Results showed that females were more likely than males to endorse dependence symptoms and report experiencing dependence symptoms at a younger age. Females also progressed faster to regular use of drugs than males. Females were more likely than males to begin substance use with cigarettes, whereas males typically began substance use with alcohol. Suicidality was more common in females, but groups did not differ on the prevalence of depression diagnoses or on previous psychiatric treatment history. Future studies are needed to investigate possible physiologic/psychologic bases for the greater susceptibility for females to report substance dependence symptoms.

KEYWORDS: Adolescent, substance, gender, dependence, drug

The Relation of Mood and Behavior to Alcohol Use in Adolescent Suicide Attempters

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Background: Substance use has been shown to be an important risk factor for suicidal behavior in adolescence. In this study, rates of substance use in a sample of adolescents who had attempted suicide were examined as were the relationships of mood state and behavior problems to substance use.

Method: Adolescents (N = 106) treated in an emergency department or pediatric inpatient unit following a suicide attempt were administered a standardized clinical assessment battery including detailed measures of alcohol involvement.

Results: Seven percent of the sample reported alcohol or other drug use at the time of the attempt. About one third of the sample reported having been drunk at least once and one fifth reported at least one alcohol-related problem; 6% of the sample met diagnostic criteria for either alcohol abuse or dependence. Behavior problems were more strongly related to quantity and frequency of alcohol use than mood state. Hopelessness and behavior problems were both related to the severity of alcohol involvement.

Conclusions: Results suggest that alcohol use among suicide attempters is more strongly related to conduct than mood disturbance.

KEYWORDS: Adolescent suicide attempters, depressed mood, substance use, alcohol

Depressed Mood, Gender, and Problem Drinking in Youth

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Background: Depressed mood and substance misuse are prevalent during adolescence, but rates differ between males and females. Little is known regarding how depressed mood influences response to substance use interventions and interacts with gender in connection with subsequent drinking. This study explores the relationship of depressed mood and gender to treatment response in adolescents admitted to an Emergency Department (ED) for alcohol-related incidents.

Methods: Adolescents treated at an ED were randomly assigned to a Motivational Interviewing condition or to standard hospital care. Participants (N = 268; ages 13 to 19) were followed for 6 months with detailed measures of alcohol involvement and depressed mood.

Results: Depressed mood at the time of the ED visit predicted less drinking at 6-month follow-up for 13- to 17-year-old girls, but predicted more follow-up drinking for 13- to 17-year-old boys and for 18- to 19-year-old females, above and beyond effects of baseline drinking. Depressed mood did not moderate the relationship between treatment condition and drinking outcome.

Conclusions: Depressed mood as reported at the time of an ED visit appears to motivate drinking reductions in early- to mid-adolescent girls. Depressive symptoms may indicate an adaptive distress response to the event that precipitated the ED visit, which clinicians could capitalize on by heightening awareness of adverse risks and collaborating to set goals. In contrast, depression may be a liability in teenage boys and older teenage girls, and mood symptoms could be an additional target for intervention.

KEYWORDS: Adolescence, brief intervention, motivational interviewing, depressed mood, alcohol use, emergency department
Adolescent substance use continues to be a serious public health and social problem. However, very little research has been conducted to understand substance use treatment for adolescents during the past thirty years. This study reports on adolescents in publicly funded AOD treatment programs from 1997-1999 (N = 4,733). Analyses are presented examining sex and ethnic differences within this population. Females were more likely to report methamphetamine and males reported marijuana use. Females were more likely to report injection drug use; males were more likely to be mandated to treatment. Hispanic and African American youth were referred into treatment from criminal justice; reported marijuana as the primary drug; much less likely to be IDUs; be mandated to treatment; and released unsatisfactorily compared to white adolescents. Implications for future research and substance abuse treatment are discussed.

KEYWORDS. Alcohol, drugs, treatment, adolescents, sex, ethnicity