“In the News”

**DRUG NEWS**

**Painkiller Overdose Deaths Rising  12/2008**
A new study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* suggests that deaths from accidental overdoses of prescription medications in the U.S. are on the rise. The study also reported a pattern of “doctor shopping” for painkillers. For instance, in West Virginia in 2006 there were 295 fatal prescription overdose victims; 63 percent of the victims did not have a prescription for the drug on which they overdosed.

**Baby Boomers Continue Recreational Drug Use in Senior Years  6/2008**
Researchers from the *National Institute on Drug Abuse* cast doubt on the theory that these lifelong recreational drug users will “age out” of their use of marijuana or other substances as they get older. In fact, illicit drug use in the U.S. from 2002 to 2005 among people ages 50-59 rose 2.7%. Experts say that the trends may be related to the fact that people are living longer and holding on to the drug-use habits of their youth.

**Kids Face Rising Risk of Accidental Opiate Overdose  10/2008**
New research, which appeared in the *Annals of Emergency Medicine*, suggests that the increased availability of prescription opiates like hydrocodone, oxycodone and methadone is responsible for a surge in accidental overdose deaths and injuries among children under the age of 6. Prescription drugs have become a primary cause of child poisonings, second only to carbon monoxide poisoning.

**Parents Underestimate Teens Access to Prescription Drugs  12/2008**
Parents significantly underestimate how easy it is for teens to buy prescription drugs. This finding is particularly concerning given the recent research showing that teens are using prescription drugs at a higher rate and that these drugs can be bought on the internet without a prescription.

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ALCOHOL NEWS

Study Links Alcohol Consumption with Decreased Brain Volume  10/2008
A study conducted at Wellesley College revealed a “significant negative linear relationship” between the amount of alcohol consumed and total cerebral brain volume, which can increase the risk of dementia and problems with thinking, learning and memory. Researchers also found that women experienced greater declines in brain volume than men at every level of alcohol consumption. This study appeared in the October 2008 issue of Archives of Neurology.

New Data Shows Disturbing Number of Repeat Drunk Drivers  12/2008
Nationally, an estimated two million drunk drivers with three or more convictions (including 400,000 drunk drivers with five or more convictions) will share our roadways this holiday season. These figures are based on data reported to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. “The criminal justice system’s ‘catch and release’ approach to drunk driving remains a huge threat to public safety,” said Laura Dean-Mooney, national President of MADD. According to another report from the Center for Substance Abuse Research at the University of Maryland, drinking drivers involved in fatal crashes were four to eight times more likely to have a prior DUI conviction than drivers who had not been drinking.

Alcohol Becoming an Equal Opportunity Destroyer  5/2008
Alcohol dependence was once much more common among men than women in the U.S., but the gender gap is closing. Researchers at the Washington University School of Medicine have found that alcohol consumption and dependence have been rising among White and Hispanic women since the end of World War II. According to the researchers, a changing cultural environment that has seen more women going to college, entering the workforce, gaining purchasing power and defying gender stereotypes has played a role in alcohol-related trends among women. This research appeared in the journal Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research.

Study Links Adolescent Insomnia to Alcohol, Other Drug Use  10/2008
New research out of the University of North Texas found that adolescents who reported experiencing insomnia symptoms (trouble falling asleep almost every day) were more likely to use alcohol, marijuana and cocaine. Those with insomnia were also 2.3 times more likely to develop depression in early adulthood than adolescents without symptoms of insomnia.

Drinking Games Contribute to Youths Drinking Themselves to Death
A 2008 analysis of federal records shows that 157 college-age individuals drank themselves to death between 1999 and 2005. Further analysis indicated that while college students drank roughly the same amount of alcohol as other adults, they tend to drink more at one sitting, often as part of drinking games like beer pong. College-age youth who died had an average blood-alcohol level of .40 percent – five times the legal limit for presumed intoxication.
TOBACCO NEWS

Depression More Common Among Smokers  4/2008
According to a study of more than 8,500 people published in Science Daily, smokers are 41 percent more likely to suffer from clinical depression than nonsmokers. The study also found that as a persons smoking rate increases, their physical activity level decreases.

According to Women and Smoking: A Report of the U.S. Surgeon General, women now account for 39 percent of all smoking-related deaths each year in the United States, a proportion that has more than doubled since 1965. Since 1980, nearly three million U.S. women have died prematurely from smoking. The report concluded that the increased likelihood of lung cancer, cardiovascular disease, and reproductive-health problems among female smokers makes tobacco use a serious women’s-health issue.

Smoking Raises Risk for Head and Neck Cancers  8/2008
Researchers from the National Cancer Institute who studied the health records of more than 476,000 men and women concluded that smoking increases the risk of head and neck cancers among both genders. Among men, 45 percent of head and neck cancers are related to smoking, but smoking is related to 75 percent of such cancers in women.

Nicotine Hinders Chemotherapy  4/2008
According to research that appeared in an edition of Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, continuing to use nicotine patches or gum after cancer surgery (or to resume smoking) makes chemotherapy less effective. Nicotine appears to protect cancer cells from helpful chemotherapy drugs like gemcitabine, cisplatin, and taxol.

Tobacco Companies Knew of Polonium in Cigarettes for Decades  9/2008
Tobacco companies have known for 40 years that tobacco contains radioactive polonium-210 but never disclosed their research to the public after failing to find a way to remove the substance from cigarettes. Experts say that smoking a pack and a half a day of cigarettes exposes smokers to the radiation equivalent of getting 300 chest x-rays annually.

Smoking, Drinking Harmful to Students’ GPAs  10/2008
New research by the University of Minnesota of 10,000 students from 14 Minnesota schools concludes that smoking and binge drinking can cause significant drops in undergraduate grade-point averages. Lead researcher Ed Ehlinger said, “using tobacco to calm down or ‘to be social’ is lowering students’ grades.”
U.S. Smoking Rate Hits Historic Low  11/2008
The smoking rate in the U.S. may be at its lowest level since mass consumer marketing of tobacco products began in the 1920's. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the smoking rate in 2007 was down to 19.8 percent.

Decline in New Cases of Lung Cancer for Men, Increases for Women
The U.S. has seen a steady decline in the number of cancer cases and the number of cancer deaths over the last 15 years, according to a December 2008 report from the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society. The report also shows a continuation of the long-term trend of decreased incidence of lung cancer among men and increased incidence among women.

Cigarettes and Alcohol Combined Pose Greater Cancer Risk  11/2008
Findings presented at a meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research suggested that the combination of smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol increases the risk of throat and stomach cancers. It appears that current smokers have the highest risks, and former smokers have intermediate risks compared with those who have never smoked.

Smoking, Drinking Linked to Early Onset of Pancreatic Cancer  5/2008
People who smoke tobacco or are heavy drinkers tend to develop pancreatic cancer at a younger age than those who abstain. University of Michigan research indicated that long-term heavy smokers developed pancreatic cancer an average of seven years earlier than nonsmokers, while heavy drinkers developed it an average of 10 years sooner than nondrinkers.

RESOURCES
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Alcoholics Anonymous
Noon Meeting (Mon.-Sat.)
Blue Valley United Methodist Church
835 Church Ave.
Phone: 537-9260

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