

Drug How People Acquire Drug Abuse Habit

(Fourth of six articles.)
By BILL NEUBAUER
Sentinel Staff Writer

There is no mystery in the county's worsening drug scene about how people acquire a drug abuse habit.

Harry Richardson of the Do It Now Foundation, P.O. Box 223, Santa Cruz, said there is heavy use of marijuana and psychedelic drugs, that some graduate to amphetamines and barbiturates and that others go on to heroin.

"There is not necessarily a connection between these," Richardson said, "but those prone to seek escape or to commit excess progress to extreme usage, and they are now into the true drugs which are going to kill them."

Drugs are acquired in many ways that are not related to the traditional concept of sale by underworld pushers.

"A lot of times," says Ed Stedfeld of the Drug Abuse Preventive Center, 1084 Emeline Ave., "friends of a young person or adult, get the person started. Say it's marijuana. There is a little kick, and the person thinks it is groovy, cool. Or the marijuana doesn't seem to fulfill a need of something stronger, so something else is tried, an amphetamine or a barbiturate. We are concerned about marijuana smoking by young people because we feel this produces a need in an individual for that type of enjoyment and this leads toward development of some kind of drug need."

Sgt. James Marston of the Sheriff's department, social workers of the welfare department, school officials and concerned lay people say there is no trouble finding the drug one wants if he goes out to look for it.

"Many who are addicted to drugs are glad to supply them to others because they support their own habits that way," Marston said.

Marijuana, amphetamines, barbiturates, LSD and heroin are big in the local drug scene, District Attorney Peter Chang and Marston indicated. There is glue sniffing and use of other exotic drugs, as well.

Drugs originating in Mexico and China are thought by Dr. Donald Seapy of Scotts Valley to be imported by various means into the county. Marston said that some drugs can be manufactured locally in four or five-pound lots in a "kitchen" in about 8 to 12 hours. Not too many barbiturates are illegally manufactured, he said, these being obtained through "buys" and thefts of legitimate drugs from stores, medicine cabinets and other places.

"Marijuana is all over," Marston said. "It's the social drug of kids and many adults. How can kids afford it? Some get money from their parents, of course. Then, there has been a sharp increase countywide in car clouts and petty thefts."

What is the drug user buying for his money?

Essentially, he is trying to buy pleasure in the form of

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a "kick," or "flash," a sense of well-being or euphoria, authorities say.

Heroin produces a relaxed "awayness" or pleasant dream-like state. Amphetamines, which are stimulants, induce a false feeling that all's well. Barbiturates relax the control nervous system. Their claimed pleasurable effects include the ability to relax, the ability to relate to others, a drunkenness similar to alcohol, and a feeling of self confidence.

Some drug abusers combine use of amphetamines and barbiturates to get effects of chemical ups and downs. Others seek quicker effects by injecting methamphetamine into their veins at regular intervals, a highly dangerous practice known as "speeding."

Until the drug abuser suffers the inevitable cropper, the effects of the drug of his choice do give him extreme pleasure. Heroin, for example, is said to produce the most intense euphoria known. It is said the sensation is more satisfying than sex and is longer lasting, that one feels at complete peace with the world. These sensations are known as the "high."

The trouble is there are harmful physiological and sociological side effects. Physiologically there are dangers of overdose, which kills, dental and gum decay, masking of other physi-

cal problems, bladder dilatation and atony and, last but not least, physical addiction.

Sociologically, the habit is too expensive for the average person to support, costing from \$30 to \$150 daily, depending upon quality of the "bag" bought. To get the money, addicts are usually forced into lives of burglary and other crimes of property.

Amphetamines are dangerous when abused because they combat fatigue and sleepiness and curb appetite. Used in moderate doses, as prescribed by a physician, they are beneficial. If abused, these "pep" pills or "diet" pills can be most dangerous. Often to maintain the high effect or "flash," (body orgasm) abusers go on "runs" of several days.

Problems here are that abuse can lead to sudden and total collapse because the drug short-circuits feelings of exhaustion.

"This drug is most dangerous," Dr. Seapy said. "People start by popping pills and gradually work up to heavier use."

When methamphetamine is injected to go on a speed binge, the user gets into more serious trouble. During a speed binge the user may inject 1 to 15 grams a day, whereas the average medical dose is 5 to 15 milligrams. The injection is repeated 2 to 10 times a day and the cycle is repeated again and again. With each "hit" a

"flash" occurs. The user may stay high for several days. Between hits he is euphoric, hyperactive, hyperexcitable. He doesn't sleep and he rarely eats.

Results are that when the speed binge ends the abuser may be extremely exhausted and enter a prolonged subacute phase of extreme psychological depression. There can be many physiological effects.

There are other possible negative effects, including paranoid or schizophrenic reaction, high suicide potential, inability to develop a meaningful social life. There is a possibility of a psychological dependence on the drug being developed, as well as a physical dependence.

Barbiturates also sell the abusers short in the long run. Abuse can lead to physical addiction and physiological dependence. Acute use can lead to overdose and death by coma and respiratory depression. The withdrawal syndrome includes delirium and hallucinations, (similar to the DT's of alcohol withdrawal), fever, convulsions and possible death. The addict must be withdrawn from the drug medically, in a hospital.

Barbiturates, according to the National Institute of Mental Health, are highly dangerous when taken without medical advice and prescription.

But the demand locally for these and other drugs is increasing, authorities say, probably because when the user takes the first step toward drug abuse it's only just a social or "spree" thing for him, something taken without thought of

possible consequences.

"This is why we are concerned about marijuana," Stedfeld said at the Drug Abuse Preventive Center. "It can be a first step."

A welfare department social worker said, "None of the kids think when they begin they may become an addict. They talk about their parents' use of alcohol and think this makes it all right for them to use marijuana. A lot start out at pill parties. There can be psychological dependence on all these drugs, if not addiction."

Undersheriff Paul Tara said, "I'm sometimes asked why marijuana penalties shouldn't be eliminated the same way they eliminated the Prohibition laws governing the use of alcohol."

"When they're finished telling me that marijuana isn't all that bad, I ask a question in return. I ask: do two wrongs make a right? Sure, alcohol is harmful. Until these other drugs came along, more than 60 per cent of the people we held in the county jail were put there because of alcohol-induced crimes. People came to that when they took their first drink. Now people are here because they abused their first drug, whether it was marijuana or something else."

But getting this point across to the ever increasing drug abusers in the county is difficult.

Dr. Seapy thinks this must be done through parental and student education. Many officials in the county agree.