

Good And Bad Of Drugs Should Be Explained

By Mel Baughman
Sentinel Staff Writer

"In drug education it is vital to be honest, to avoid distrust and to provide youngsters a rational alternative to drug use. When you're educating about drugs, give both sides, the good and the bad. Put drugs in their perspective and avoid a scare approach that widens the credibility gap between youth and adults."

These words provide a synthesis of a recurring theme of the two-week course in physical and psychological factors of

drug education now at the halfway mark at UCSC. Sponsored by University of California Extension, Santa Cruz, the course is instructed by Dr. Joel Fort, UC Davis sociology professor and drug authority, assisted by other experts in the field. It is open only to educators, health officials and law enforcement officers.

During the first three days of the course, Dr. Fort, former director of the Center for Special Problems, San Francisco Health Department, discussed the semantics of drugs, psychological

and psychiatric aspects of drug use, and cultural and anthropological factors.

On Thursday a guest lecturer, Dr. David Smith spoke on pharmacological effects of mind-altering drugs, and the week ended with a discussion of techniques and methods of health education by Dr. David Fisher.

Dr. Smith is chief of the alcohol and drug abuse screening branch of the San Francisco Center for Special Problems, and Dr. Fisher serves as a research associate at the UC School of Public Health in

Berkeley.

Throughout the week speakers have stressed the need to place the drug problem in its proper perspective and to avoid the sensational approach that is illustrated in, according to the experts, "the hysterical and emotional reactions" among elements of "straight" society to use of LSD and other hallucination-producing drugs.

Suggesting the "tail is wagging the dog," the experts have repeated again and again the drug problem in America encompasses both abuse and misuse of drugs. And they emphasize that the major drug abuse problem in the United States today is alcohol.

Viewing the problem from the pharmacologist's point of view, Dr. Smith declares drug abuse falls into three categories—sedatives, including alcohol and barbituates, narcotics and stimulants, among which are such amphetamines as Dexedrine and Methedrine.

He defines drug abuse as the use of a drug to the point where it seriously interferes with health, economic and social functioning of the individual. In addition, drug misuse is the refusal to follow the dosage specified in use of a drug that has been prescribed by a physician.

In discussing abuse of sedatives, Dr. Smith says the public fails to realize the extent of abuse of barbituates and

alcohol. He states 37 per cent of all violent crimes in San Francisco are associated with alcohol and that one out of 10 persons in the City have significant drinking problems.

Dr. Smith believes the hysterical attitude that permeates the entire nation prevents success in the search for help and solutions, and this is aggravated by the refusal of many persons who are misusers and abusers of drugs to admit that a problem exists. He says this denial of the problem is especially prevalent among members of the middle class.

He adds that the sensationalism associated with LSD clouds the picture. Dr. Smith states that the incidence of LSD is insignificant compared to the "massive sedative abuse."

On the narcotics issue, Dr. Smith says the problem is confused by semantics. He explains that the term "narcotics," scientifically refers only to those drugs derived from opium, including heroin, codeine and morphine, although in legal terms the definition is much broader.

Dr. Smith says the abuse of stimulants is increasing among youth, and he notes that there is growing use of heroin among the hippies of San Francisco, who reject alcohol as a symbol of the society they repudiate and seek to change.

Much of Dr. Smith's experi-

ence has been derived from his association with a medical clinic in the Haight-Ashbury where he has viewed the pharmacological effects of the drugs. Pharmacology, the science of drugs, relates to the properties and phenomena of drugs, especially concerning their healing or curative values.

On LSD, Dr. Smith says that while it is the most powerful of the psychedelic compounds, it is only one of many such substances. First synthesized in 1938, the psychological properties of LSD were discovered in 1943, Dr. Smith says.

Reviewing the effects of LSD on mind and body, Dr. Smith, echoes Dr. Fort in deploring the restrictions imposed by present law on research efforts. He states, for example, that no new research application has been granted in the past 18 months.

In Friday's lecture on health educational techniques, Dr. Fisher declared the goal of education must be to build a response among youth that will lead to avoidance of drugs. This, he says, involves reinforcement of the types of behavior desired, appropriate conditioning to insure pleasant experiences while learning, and the presentation of proper models for youth to follow.

Tomorrow, Dr. Fisher will lecture on school programs of drug, health and family life education.

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Reform Of State Drug Laws Not In Foreseeable Future

Reform of California's drug laws is unlikely in the foreseeable future, Dr. Joel Fort believes.

The former director of the San Francisco Center for Special Problems and professor of sociology at the Davis campus of University of California was interviewed following a lecture during the drug education course now in progress at UCSC.

Dr. Fort states that the election of Ronald Reagan as governor set back reform efforts that were under study by the Assembly Committee on Criminal Procedure. These efforts were dropped following last fall's election, he says.

looks to the courts for leadership in this area. For example, next month he will travel to Boston, Mass., where, on September 18, he will be the lead-off witness in a hearing before a Massachusetts court on constitutional aspects of that state's law banning possession and use of marijuana. Dr. Fort says this action may be followed by an effort to challenge the 30-year-old federal Marijuana Tax Act.

The real solution, however, to the growing use of drugs among youth may lie at home, according to Dr. Fort. Citing the generation gap, he says parents and youth in many cases cannot talk with each

icate with and to understand their children and their problems.

And so youth, victims of parental neglect and living in an atmosphere of intolerance and fear, sees no meaningful alternative to the sometimes exhilarating, but often tragic, trips with LSD and other mind-altering drugs.

Dr. Fort suggests that education, like charity, begins at home and that the parent may still be the best catalyst for expanding the consciousness of youth.

—M. B.