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Drug Abusers Can't Read Faces, Study Suggests

In cooperation with

By Rick Nauert, PhD, Senior News Editor, PsychCentral.com
 posted: 04 February 2011 09:12 am ET

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Individuals who abuse drugs have difficulty identifying emotions from facial expression, new research suggests.

Spanish scientists from the University of Granada analyzed the relationship between [drug abuse](#) and recognition of basic emotions (happiness, surprise, wrath, fear, sadness and disgust) by drug abusers. They found the abusers had trouble identifying wrath, disgust, fear and sadness by facial expression.

Further, regular abuse of alcohol, cannabis and cocaine usually affects abusers' cognitive fluency (how easy it is to think about something) and decision-making. Consuming cannabis and cocaine negatively affects working memory and reasoning. Similarly, cocaine abuse influences inhibition.

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For the purpose of this study, researchers carried out a neuropsychological evaluation (with neurocognitive evaluation and emotional processing tests) of a total of 123 polysubstance abusers and 67 no-drug users with similar social and demographic backgrounds (age and schooling).

The target population were individuals who consumed drugs such as cocaine, cannabis, heroin, alcohol, MDMA (ecstasy) and [methamphetamine](#), and who were enrolled in two rehabilitation projects in the province of Granada.

The study revealed that 70 percent of [drug abusers](#) presented some type of neuropsychological

deterioration, regardless of the type of substance consumed. Deterioration was most pronounced in [working memory](#), but fluency, flexibility, planning, multitasking ability and interference were also affected.

Dr. J.M. Fernández Serrano, a psychologist and principal investigator, thinks that the results obtained "should be employed to develop political and social policies aimed at promoting adequate rehab programs adapted to the neuropsychological profile of drug-abusers."

The research conducted at the University of Granada has been the first to study the prevalence of psychological deterioration in drug abusers enrolled in therapeutic communities.

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Tariu wrote:

posted 06 February 2011, 11:34 am ET

I think they should next test the effects of prescription drug abuse and then compare that study and this one to see which does more harm.

"Further, regular abuse of alcohol, cannabis and cocaine usually affects abusers' cognitive fluency (how easy it is to think about something) and decision-making."

So, everyone still has to wonder why one of these is legal and the other 2 are not...oh, thats right. Interesting that history seems to be repeating itself with one of the two there that isnt legal.

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