Press Release

March 16, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: Study Highlights Connection Between Sleep and Opioid Use Disorder

According to a recent study conducted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) most common mental disorders, from depression and anxiety to PTSD, are associated with disturbed sleep, and substance use disorders are no exception. The relationship may be complex and bidirectional: Substance use causes sleep problems; but insomnia and insufficient sleep may also be a factor raising the risk of drug use and addiction. Recognizing the importance of this once-overlooked factor, addiction researchers are paying increased attention to sleep and sleep disturbances, and even thinking about ways to target sleep disruption in substance use disorder treatment and prevention.

Most kinds of substance use acutely disrupt sleep-regulatory systems in the brain, affecting the time it takes to fall asleep (latency), duration of sleep, and sleep quality. People who use drugs also experience insomnia during withdrawal, which fuels drug cravings and can be a major factor leading to relapse. Additionally, because of the central role of sleep in consolidating new memories, poor quality sleep may make it harder to learn new coping and self-regulation skills necessary for recovery.

Many forms of drug use and sleep disturbances are increasingly well understood. Dopamine is a neurochemical crucial for understanding the relationship between substance use disorders and sleep. Direct or indirect stimulation of dopamine reward pathways accounts for the users addictive properties; but dopamine also modulates alertness and is implicated in the sleep-wake cycle. Dopaminergic drugs are used to treat disorders of alertness and arousal such as narcolepsy. Cocaine and amphetamine-like drugs (such as methamphetamine) are among the most potent dopamine-increasing drugs, and their repeated misuse can lead to severe sleep deprivation. Sleep deprivation in turn downregulates dopamine receptors, which makes people more impulsive and vulnerable to drug taking.

Opioid drugs such as heroin interact with the body's endogenous opioid system by binding to mu-opioid receptors; this system also plays a role in regulating sleep. Morpheus, the Greek god of sleep and dreams, gave his name to morphia or morphine, the medicinal derivative of opium. Natural and synthetic opioid drugs can produce profound sleepiness, but they also can disrupt sleep by increasing transitions between different stages of sleep (known as disruptions in sleep architecture), and people undergoing withdrawal can experience terrible insomnia. Opioids in brainstem regions also control respiration, and when they are taken at high doses they can dangerously inhibit breathing during sleep.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) is a United States federal-government research institute whose mission is to "lead the Nation in bringing the power of science to bear on drug abuse and addiction". For more information please visit www.drugabuse.gov.

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. Its Coalition is conducting an opioid prevention awareness campaign entitled, "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE," in order to educate and update the community regarding opioid use and its consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the Opioid Epidemic at www.safeglencove.org.