

# A&M study shows addicts not always hooked for life

By MELISSA SPANN  
Reporter

The old philosophy — once an addict, always an addict — does not hold true, according to Dr. D. Dwayne Simpson, a Texas A&M psychology professor and director of a heroin addiction study conducted by A&M's Behavioral Research Program.

"People get off drugs many different ways, and what we established in this particular study is that treatment has a lot to do with that," Simpson said. The treatment may not cause the addicts to get off drugs, he said, but it at least provides them with a place to go and a support system.

The 12-year nationwide study of heroin addicts shows that daily use of heroin among former drug abusers has decreased drastically, Simpson said.

From a national perspective the study is the longest-running examination of what happens to heroin addicts after they receive help from federally funded community treatment centers, he said.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is funding the study, and the findings are being used by NIDA to help formulate federal funding policies for drug abuse treatment.

An earlier stage of the study focused on program success in treating addicts and on which types of programs worked better, Simpson said.

"As taxpayers, we spend around \$500 million annually supporting drug abuse treatment programs in the country," he said.

Many of the addicts do not realize how they affect other people's lives, Simpson said. He said many addicts are very self-centered and do not think about laws and families.

"As often seen in the philosophy of more recent generations, if using drugs feels good, do it," Simpson said. "It's my life, and if I'm not messing up anyone else then why do you care?"

Although this is the attitude many addicts take, their addiction does affect taxpayers, he said.

During the three-phase study, the addicts were

asked why they started using heroin, Simpson said. The responses varied, but many had to do with curiosity, sensation seeking, relaxation, psychological effects and getting away from problems, he said.

"The drug scene is much more complicated today," Simpson said.

Drug abuse is much broader, and there are many more different kinds of drugs, he said.

"Drugs are much more faddish," Simpson said. "We have drugs that come and go."

"The problem we have now is that information and knowledge about the effects of drugs and personal choices are not always consistent. Our attitudes about things often are not consistent with our behaviors."

Many people get pulled in and addicted to drugs the same way as with smoking and alcohol, Simpson said.

People believe they are different and are in control, he said. The process happens very gradually, and people get caught in it and don't realize how far into it they are, he added.

More younger people are becoming involved in drugs, Simpson said. The use of heroin has dropped, he said, but multiple drug use has increased.

Simpson said most drug use is labeled recreational, meaning that people try drugs for fun but don't use them regularly.

During the study, addicts were asked why they quit using drugs, and more than 80 percent said they quit because they were tired of the drug life, Simpson said.

Fear of the law was also reported by about 60 percent, and about 60 percent of the addicts said their families and friends influenced them to quit, he said.

"The philosophy fortunately is changing somewhat," Simpson said. "I think there is still a lot of self-indulgence in our culture, but a lot of it's becoming health-conscious and preventive in nature."

Simpson said he believes that AIDS will have some impact on drug-use patterns.

"I think it's going to have a substantial impact, probably as much as anything that has ever happened," Simpson said, "but no one really knows."

## Artificial heart recipient in stable condition

Associated Press

HOUSTON — A 41-year-old retired Army officer was listed in stable condition Wednesday after receiving a Jarvik-7 artificial heart, surgeons at the Texas Heart Institute said.

A team at St. Luke's Episcopal Hospital headed by Dr. Denton Cooley completed the two-hour operation about 1 a.m. Tuesday on Maj. Harris Kent of El Paso.

Cooley said the operation was necessary because doctors felt Kent would die in a few hours without it.

Frazier and Cooley said the artificial heart was being used as a tempo-

rary life-saving device to be replaced by a donor human heart.

Kent was described as awake and alert and responding appropriately.

The only complication during the operation was that the artificial heart did not properly fit in the man's chest and surgeons had to make some slight adjustments, Frazier said.

The Texas Heart Institute recently received U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval to use the Jarvik-7.

Kent became the third person in the nation this week to receive an implant.

Cooley said doctors inserted an intra-aortic balloon pump to help

Kent's heart on Jan. 29. Three days later, his condition stabilized and the pump was removed. Monday, however, his condition worsened and the artificial heart was implanted.

Cooley, who performed the nation's first successful heart transplant in 1968 and the world's first artificial heart transplant a year later, lately has criticized permanent artificial hearts, saying the devices are useful only for keeping patients alive until they can receive a human heart.

"We have felt from the beginning that the total artificial heart in its current form is in the developmental stage," Cooley said.



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Office hours 8:30-12:00, 1:00-4:30

No pictures will be taken at the Pavilion this year