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Journal Club and Critique

The publication “Tobacco, cocaine, and heroin: Craving and use during daily life” taken from the *Addictive Behaviors* peer reviewed journal published in 2010 by David H. Epstein, et al, contains information that has been gathered from a study group and analyzed pertaining to the use of tobacco in cocaine and/or heroin users. The goal of the study is to gain a better understanding of whether or not tobacco use and heroin and/or cocaine use coincide with one another, and whether addicts seeking help for recovery should be offered tobacco addiction services as well.

The title of the article gives the reader a clear and concise idea of what the article is about without being exceedingly lengthy. The introductory paragraphs lure the reader in with interesting information that is not too jumbled by scientific jargon, making it easy to read and understand. The sufficient background information states that tobacco may have a negative effect on heroin and cocaine users whilst seeking treatment. This information justifies the reasoning behind the study. This is an important issue to research, as the information could help rehab services attain a greater success rate of rehabilitating heroin and cocaine addicts.

This article presents sound information from a variety of sources as well as information gathered in this study that lasted for a mean of 131 days. The article follows a straightforward layout that allows for ease of reading and comprehension. Accompanying the written portion of the article are charts and graphs to help readers visualize the results better.

As stated in the references section, the NIDA Intramural Research Program funded this study, but had no further say in any aspect of the study. That leads one to conclude that there is no bias linked to the study and the results are purely for educational sake. While selecting potential subjects for the study, the criteria were as limiting as necessary to ensure the results were as pure as possible. This means that any person with an alcohol dependence, cognitive impairment or illness severe enough to compromise the results be excluded from the study.

The sample size used in the study is nowhere close to the population of people that are affected by the results of the study, but it is a start. The study included 114 men and women between the ages of 20 and 58 who were habitual poly-drug users (in this case, it is limited to heroin and cocaine use). Of those 114 people, 106 claimed to have smoked cigarettes while participating in the study and their results are included in the data presented in the publication.

The methods that are used to gather data in this study seem sound. Each candidate was issued a handheld device that would prompt responses at random times during waking hours. The responses had to do with drug and cigarette craving and consumption, along with mood, location, and current company. Urine analysis was also used and abstinence rewarded with cash vouchers.

Since the study in question is the first of its kind, there is no previous information to back any hypothesis that may have been proposed. One of the conclusions drawn from the information gathered is that tobacco and cocaine each increase craving for the individual drug and one another. It seems as though cocaine use spikes cigarette consumption, but heroin use and cigarette consumption do not seem related to one another as much. The reasoning behind this conclusion is thought to be that heroin may cause episodes of unconsciousness where the subject cannot use cigarettes.

By using the data collected in this study, we can assume that if heroin and/or cocaine addicts who use tobacco are treated for their drug and tobacco addictions simultaneously, the odds that they will recover will increase substantially. Since the use and craving of cocaine and cigarettes seem to be directly related to one another, kicking both at the same time could eliminate the added reminder of craving and help addicts recover quicker and permanently.