

WELL NOW

WINTER 1998

YOUR HEALTH CENTER NEWSLETTER

We're a matter of degrees...

Our job at the University Health Center is to help keep students healthy so you can achieve your goals and get your degrees. That's why we're continually monitoring students' health concerns. Here are two reports written by peer health educators — the first may reassure you, the second surprise you.

SEX TAKE THE TEST



AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are the most serious health issues facing UO students, according to a survey by the University Health Center.

The survey asked 400 randomly selected students to name their no. 1 health concern.

Forty percent named AIDS and STIs, says the Health Center's Ginger Sands, a registered nurse and certified college health nurse.

AIDS and STIs are a major focus at the Health Center, which offers both information and confidential testing to students.

HIV testing requires two visits.

During the first visit, a blood sample is drawn. Additionally, students receive counseling on such matters as confidentiality, what the

results of the test really mean, and risk reduction.

A fee of \$12 is charged that can be paid in cash or charged to a student's UO account simply as "lab work." The blood sample is sent to a state laboratory for analysis, but no student's name ever leaves the Health Center.

Again, strictest confidentiality is maintained.

Two weeks later, during the second visit, the student receives test results.

To make an appointment, students need simply call the Health Center at 346-2770.

Additional information is available from the Peer Health Education office at the Health Center. To talk to a peer or make an appointment, call 346-4456.

—Lisa Marie Cole

BOOZE

PEER PRESSURE PRONE

Alcohol abuse continues to be a major concern at many colleges and universities. When the question of why students drink arises in conversation, the answer is often "it's relaxing," "nothing else better to do" or "to have a good time." The use of alcohol on campuses may stem from misperceptions about what's normal behavior. Such misperceptions could have easily been developed before entering college. We should be aware of how conversation and observations of our peers play an influential role in the development of our perceptions of "normal drinking".

Earlier this year the University of Oregon conducted an Alcohol and Drug Use Survey. This nationwide standardized survey was given to 1000 undergraduate students. The random sample survey included questions such as the perceived use of alcohol among peers as compared to the actual use. The survey showed that students perceived that 96% of their peers used alcohol at least once a week, when the actual use was 52% of students used alcohol at least once a week. This pattern of overestimating the perceived alcohol use among peers is common. Results from previous alcohol use surveys of undergraduate students at one southeastern university, one midwestern university, and one west coast university have all revealed this same pattern of misperceptions regarding alcohol use (Perkins).

Observing the behaviors of our peers may be where the false perceptions are reinforced and maintained. We are more likely to remember the intoxicated person hanging over the toilet vomiting

or passed out on the floor, but fail to recall the number people who are not drinking. According to Wesley Perkins, these observations may reinforce our perception of a mistaken norm. Another reinforcement may be as subtle as a conversation about a party where "everyone gets smashed." This could also reaffirm other students' beliefs in the false norm.

In an environment where our individuality is encouraged, it's somewhat contradictory to imply that peer influence plays a role in our behaviors. Untrue as it may seem, we may be unaware of how conversation and witnessing our peers drink can help maintain and reinforce our misperceptions. A study at Northern Illinois

University displayed similar results as the University of Oregon's Alcohol Use Survey. After informing students of the disparity between the perceived and actual use, the students were surveyed again. Interestingly, the results of the survey showed that actual drinking rates dropped as students' misperceptions were dispelled.

If you feel that you may have a problem controlling your drinking habits, contact the Health Center (346-4441) or Counseling Center (346-3227) to set up an appointment.

—Brandi Peterson

REFERENCES:

Office of Student Life, Core Alcohol and Drug Use Survey, 1997
Haines, Michael. 1993 Vol. 1, No. 2, May 1993. Oregon Higher Education Alcohol and Drug Coordinating Committee Newsletter
H. Wesley Perkins, Ph.D. Confronting Misperceptions of Peer Drug Use Norms Among College Students: An Alternative Approach for Alcohol and Other Drug Education Programs.

This four-page insert is a paid advertising supplement. Material contained herein was provided and paid for by the Student Health Center.

Workshops WINTER '98

Peer health educators organize and run most of our workshops. So not only do you learn cool stuff, you meet new people and have some fun.

Smoking Cessation

Tuesdays, 4:00-5:00 p.m.

January 27-March 3, Medical Library

Quit smoking this term and celebrate life as a non smoker. This six week workshop is open to those who want to quit and those who have already quit. Identify triggers to smoke, learn to overcome urges, adopt alternative behaviors, and address fears about possible weight gain.

Weight Management

Wednesdays, 12:00-1:00 p.m.

February 4-March 4,

Room 264, University Health Center

Increase energy, motivation and enthusiasm for life! Heighten self-confidence and learn habits for becoming physically and mentally fit including nutrition, cooking and exercise tips.

Relaxation Series

Wednesdays, 4:00-5:00 p.m.

January 28-February 11, Medical Library

Give yourself a break at this relaxation series. Learn about and experience a variety of relaxation techniques such as progressive relaxation, deep breathing and time management. Plan ahead and be there on Wednesdays.

Easy Vegetarian Cooking

Mondays, 4:30-6:00 p.m.

January 26-February 16,

University Health Center Cafeteria

Learn about and prepare quick and healthy meals. The menu will feature dishes from various ethnic cuisines. Come ready to cook and dine.

Walking

Fridays, noon-12:30

Beginning January 30,

Meet in front of the Health Center on 13th Ave.

A step in the right direction! Join us, rain or shine, for a half hour of low impact exercise.

CLIP & SAVE...

UNIVERSITY
HEALTH CENTER

We're a matter of degrees

Hours: Mon., and Wed.-Sat: 8am to 6pm

Tuesday: 9am to 6pm, Sunday: 10am to 6pm

Phone...

Appointments: 346-2770

Dental: 346-4432

Pharmacy: 346-4454

Physical Therapy: 346-4401

Insurance: 346-3702

Urgent Care: 346-2770

Women's Clinic: 346-4449

Health Education: 346-4456

Peer Health: 346-4456

General: 346-4441

On-line:

<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/uoshc/>