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COST OF CRIMES ATTRIBUTED TO ALCOHOL DOUBLE THOSE ATTRIBUTED TO DRUGS
New Study Includes Costs of Pain, Suffering and Lost Quality of Life

WASHINGTON, DC., January 9, 2007-- Drug use is often associated with crime, but the costs of crimes that can be attributed to alcohol are twice the costs that can be attributed to drugs, according to a study published in the December issue of *Prevention Science*, a peer reviewed publication of the Society for Prevention Research (SPR).

The study estimates that the annual costs of crimes that can be attributed to the perpetrator's use of alcohol are \$83 billion, while those attributed to the perpetrator's use of drugs are \$37 billion. The study relies on data compiled by the U. S. Census Bureau, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Department of Justice.

"This study is based on 1999 government statistics, but 2005 figures, which are the most recent available, have a similar pattern with alcohol crimes costing \$80 billion and drug crimes costing \$40 billion," according to study author, Ted Miller, Ph.D. of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation.

The study "updates and upgrades" previous economic analyses by including costs to the victims, the costs of treating or compensating victims, and the costs of adjudication and sanctions against those who commit the crimes.

"Both alcohol and drug use are associated with property crimes and violent crimes against individuals. Property crimes include larceny, burglary, and motor vehicle theft. Violent crimes include rape; robbery; assault; murder; sexual, physical or emotional abuse of children; and serious child neglect. Violent crimes often involve intense pain and suffering for victims and their families. This study shows that the largest costs, almost 65% of the total costs, are from pain, suffering and lost quality of life. Our study adds those losses to property and other costs of crimes involving alcohol and drugs," according to Miller.

Miller and his colleagues also looked at medical care (hospital and physician care, rehabilitation, prescriptions, coroner and funeral services, etc.); mental health (psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers); property damage and loss (value of property damage and unrecovered property); public service costs (police services, victims services, child protective services, special education); and future earnings (wages, fringe benefits, housework, life insurance and worker's compensations claims costs).

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Alcohol & Drug Crime Costs/add one

The pain and suffering costs were based on jury awards to crime victims. The researchers examined almost 1,000 jury verdicts for assaults and 800 for rape. Jury verdict data also are used in estimating pain and suffering costs in consumer product injuries and burn injuries.

The Miller study excluded costs of crimes in which the victim had been drinking alcohol or using drugs but the perpetrator had not.

The study used surveys of prison inmates conducted by the Census Bureau to determine alcohol or drug use by crime type. Inmates convicted of violent crimes reported being under the influence of alcohol in 42% of homicides, 39% of rapes, 41% of assaults, and 33% of robberies. They reported illicit drug involvement in 25% of homicides, 18% of rapes, 13% of assaults, 39% of robberies, 24% of larcenies, 36% of thefts and 23% of motor vehicle thefts.

“Property crimes account for 59% of victims of alcohol or drug involved crimes, but only 10.5% of the comprehensive costs, including personal losses in quality of life as well as future earnings. Violent crimes account for only 39% of victims but slightly over 85% of the comprehensive costs,” Miller explained.

Prevention Science is published by the Society for Prevention Research, an international organization focused on the advancement of science-based prevention programs and policies through empirical research. The membership of the organization includes scientists, practitioners, advocates, administrators and policymakers who are concerned with the prevention of social, physical and mental health problems and the promotion of health, safety and well being.

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(NOTE TO EDITORS: Although the current paper in *Prevention Science* is based on 1999 data, the authors have calculated 2005 costs based on the same formulas used to generate 1999 cost estimates. The 2005 data are presented in this news release to provide the latest available figures. The paper published in *Prevention Science* does not include 2005 data.)