



spotlight on health

New Ways To Help Patients Beat Addiction

(NAPSA)—A new physicians' outreach program could help many Americans improve their overall health, get treatments they need and have a more open relationship with their doctors.

The initiative gives medical professionals tools and resources to help screen patients and discuss drug-taking behaviors with them before these behaviors lead to serious medical problems.

In a recent study, an estimated 19.9 million Americans aged 12 or older were found to be current users of illegal drugs. Nearly one in five of those people were 18 to 25 years old. Many more are current tobacco users or alcohol bingers, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), part of the National Institutes of Health.

Fighting Addiction

Experts say the consequences of this drug use can be far reaching—playing a role in the cause and progression of many medical disorders, including addiction. Yet only a fraction of people who need addiction treatment receive it. NIDA's director, Dr. Nora D. Volkow, says the new physicians' outreach program, called NIDAMED, could help change that.

"Many patients do not discuss their drug use with their physicians and do not receive treatment even when their drug abuse escalates," she explains. "But the program enables physicians to be the first line of defense against substance abuse and addiction and to increase awareness of the impact of substance use on a patient's overall health."

The program resources include an online screening tool, a com-



New tools could help doctors and patients discuss addiction.

panion quick-reference guide and a comprehensive resource guide for clinicians. It stresses the importance of the patient-doctor relationship in identifying unhealthy behaviors before they evolve into life-threatening conditions.

Talking With Doctors

Research shows that screening, brief intervention and referral to treatment by clinicians in general medical settings can promote significant reductions in alcohol and tobacco use. A growing body of literature also suggests potential reductions in illegal and nonmedical prescription drug use. But knowing which patients need help is key.

Patients are urged to talk with their physicians about any drugs they are using, illicit or otherwise. Doing so is the first step toward receiving treatment and staying healthy.

For more information, visit www.drugabuse.gov and click on the NIDAMED icon.