

Substance Abuse in the 21st Century: Past, Present and Future

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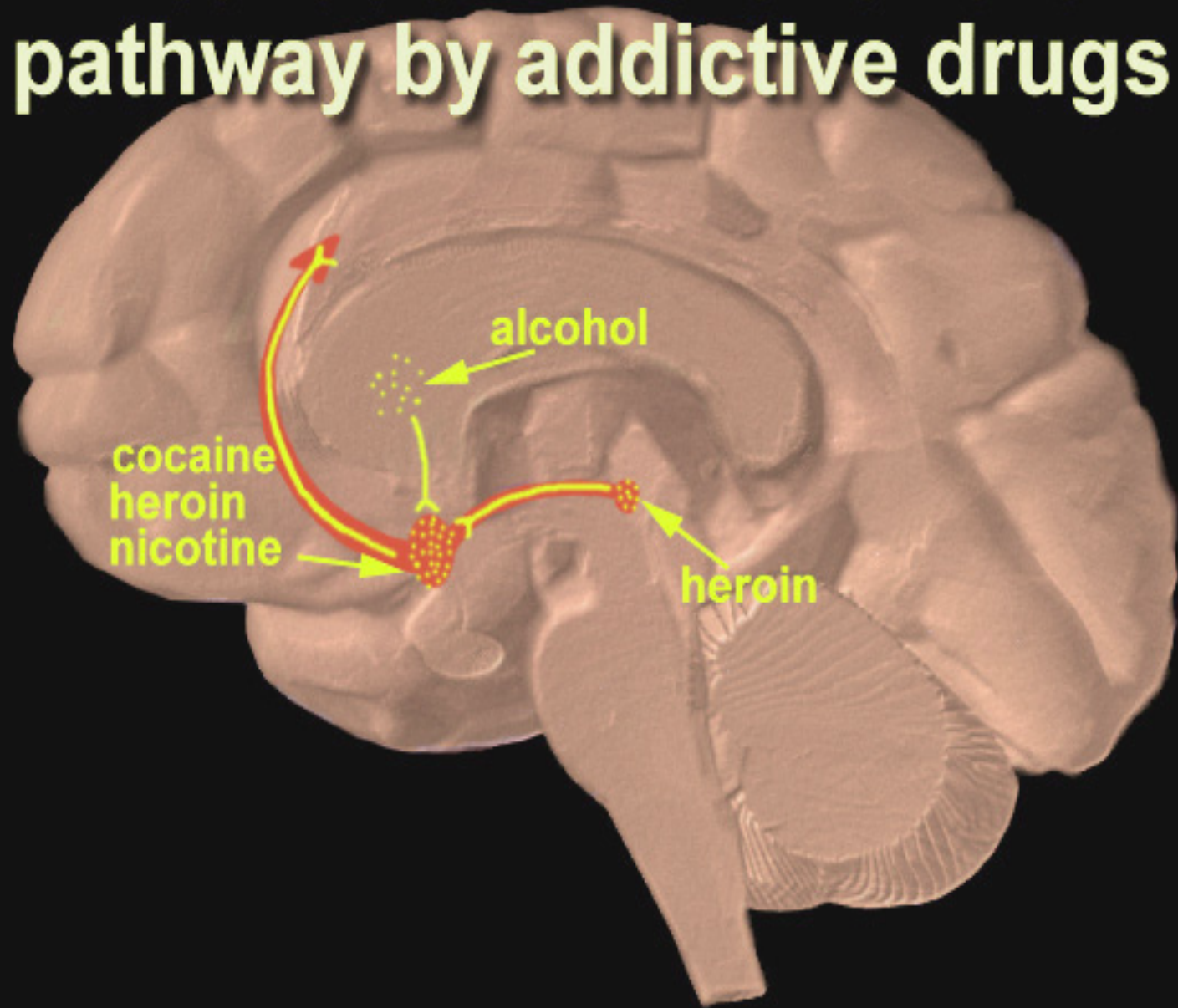


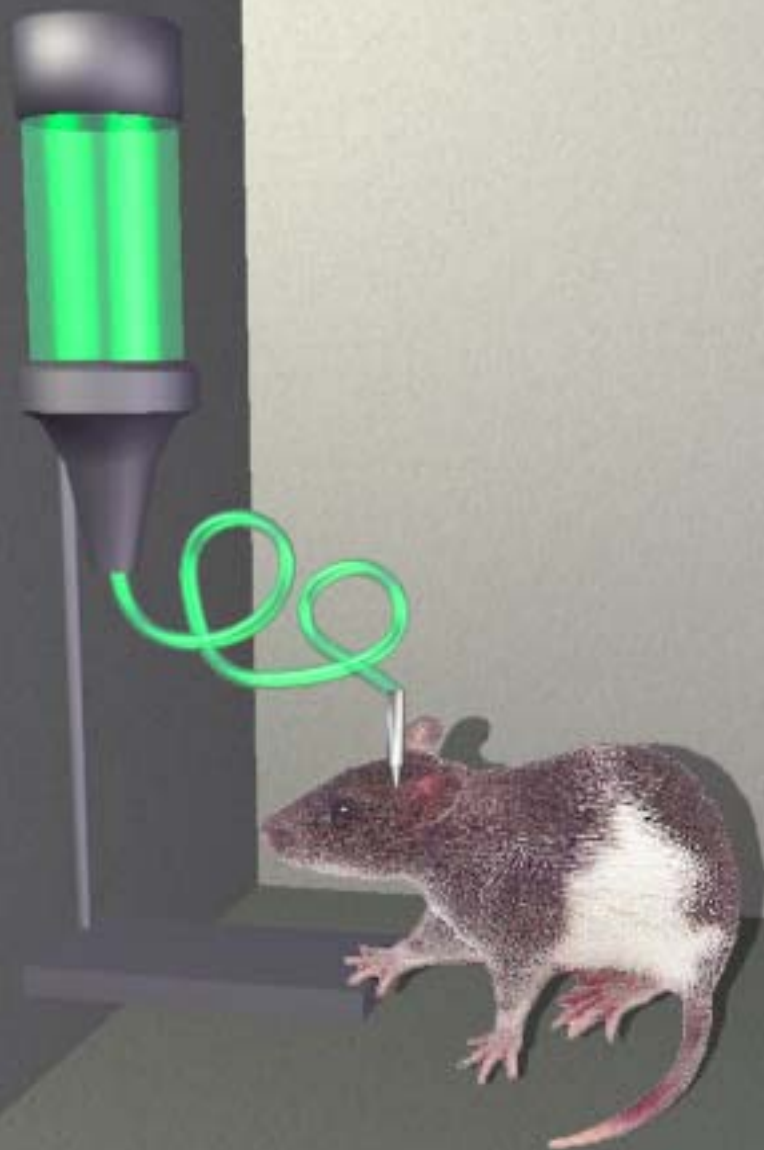
WHAT DO WE REALLY
“KNOW”?

What do we know?

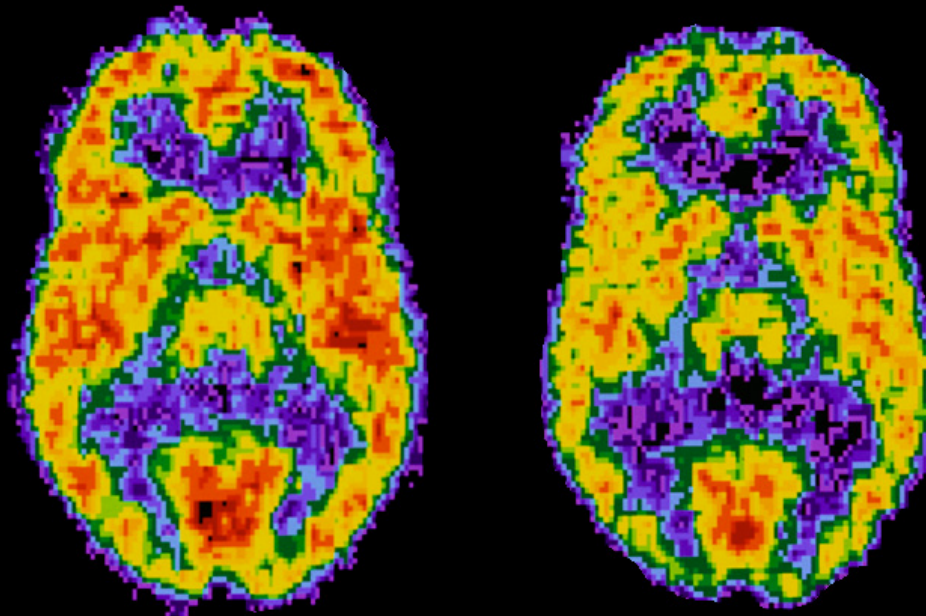
- Past: Five thousand years of recorded history suggest that the use of substances to alter mind or mood is a part of the human existence
- Present: These substances are neither moral nor immoral—but chemical compounds
- Future: Significant research on human and animal brains can predict the reaction of these chemicals on brains

Activation of the reward pathway by addictive drugs





on cocaine



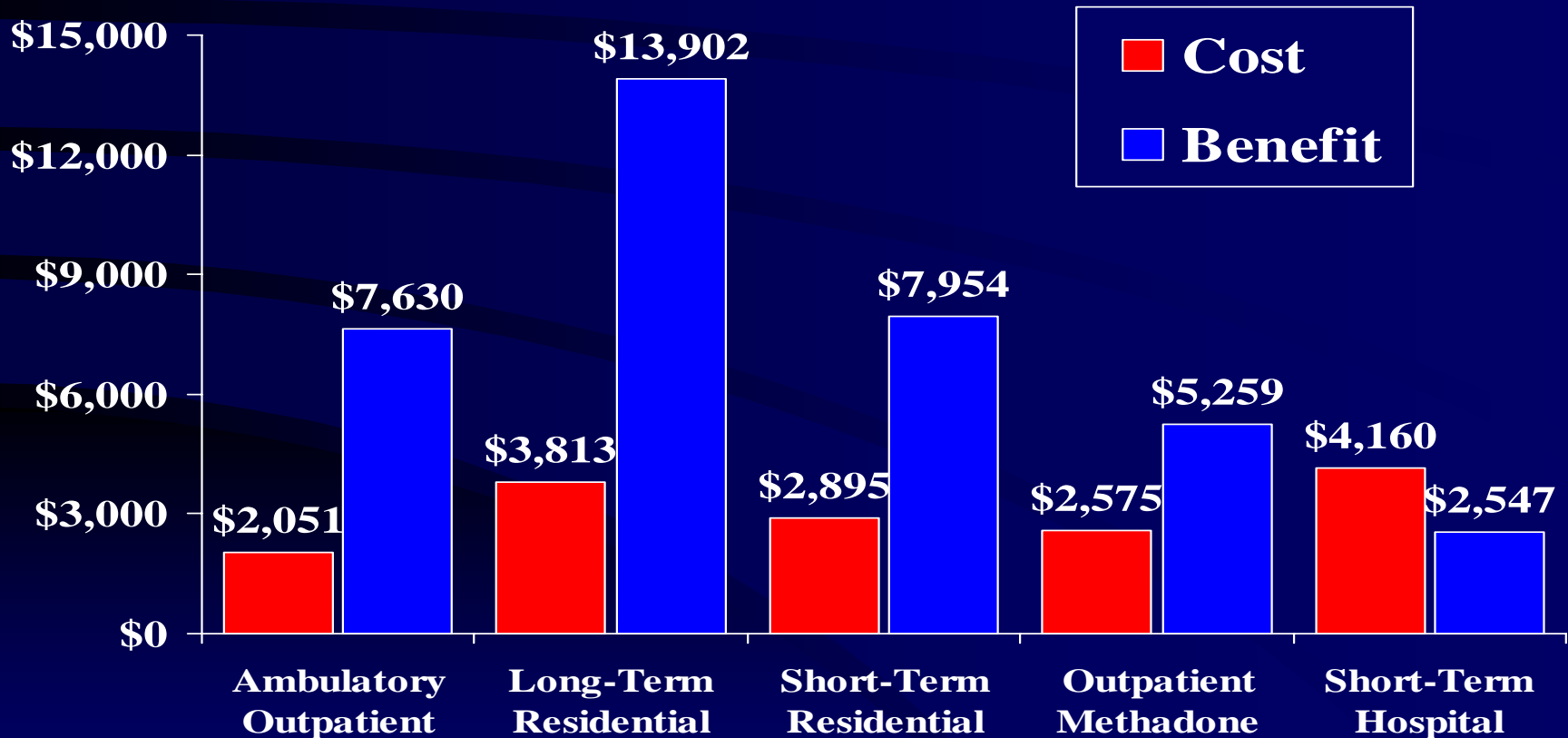
What else do we know?

- There is real and tragic harm and danger associated with both licit and illicit substance use
- During the past five thousand years most interventions for substance use issues have been based on a moral model
- Condemning or ignoring substance users, or substance use, while frequently practiced, is generally not an effective strategy

Treatment

- Treatment works
- The one consistent truth in substance abuse treatment research is that the longer someone is engaged with treatment the better the outcome
- Most users are not initially interested in treatment
- Treatment directly benefits society as a whole, as well as individuals

On average, the benefits of drug treatment outweigh the costs by a margin of 3 to 1.



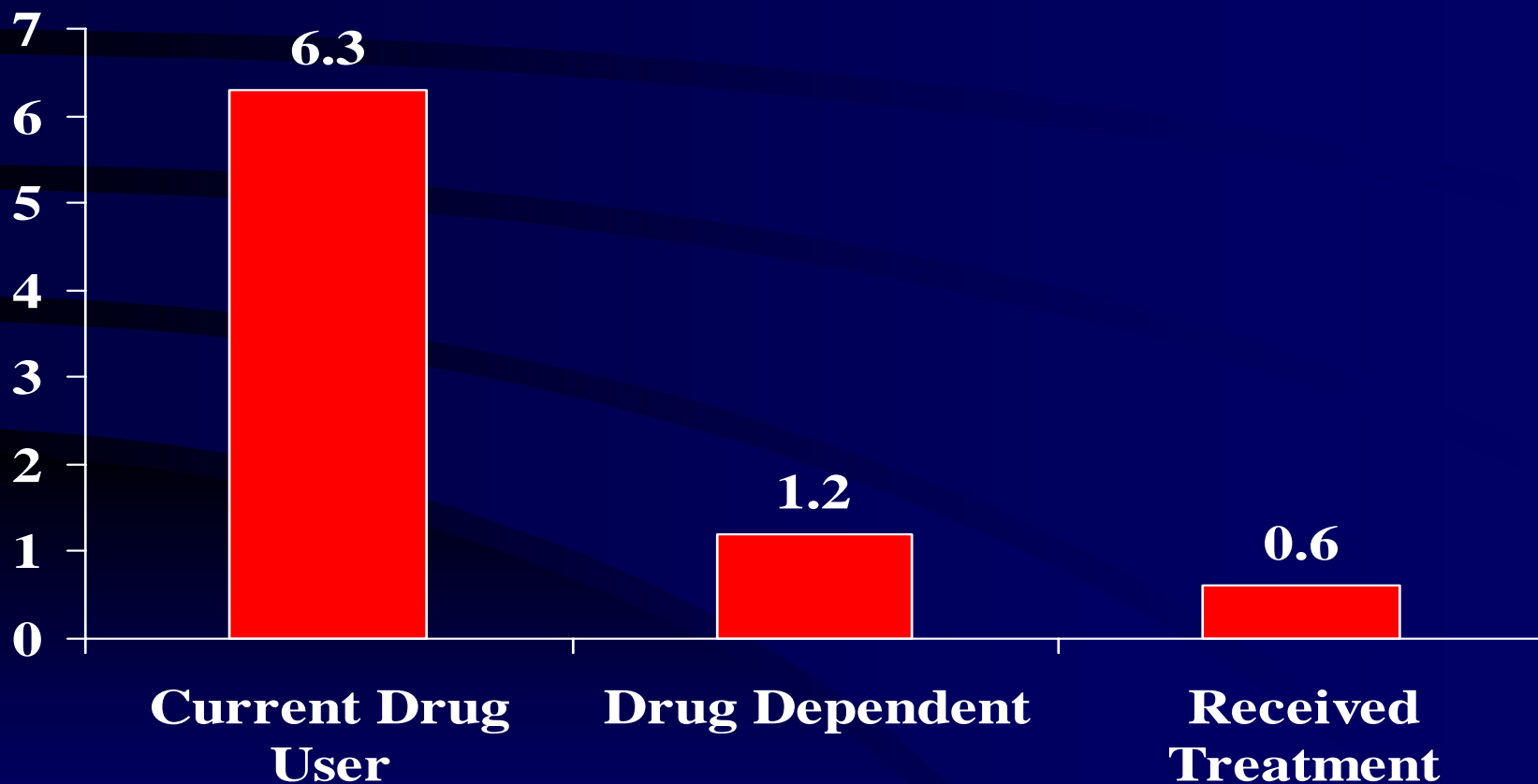
Source: CSAT, National Evaluation Data Services Report

Treatment Access

- There are significant barriers to accessing treatment for most users
- Realities of poverty, class, racism, social isolation, past trauma, sex-based discrimination and other social inequalities affect both people's vulnerability to and capacity for effectively dealing with substance issues

Less than one in five drug users are drug dependent and even fewer receive treatment

Percent of Population 12 or Older

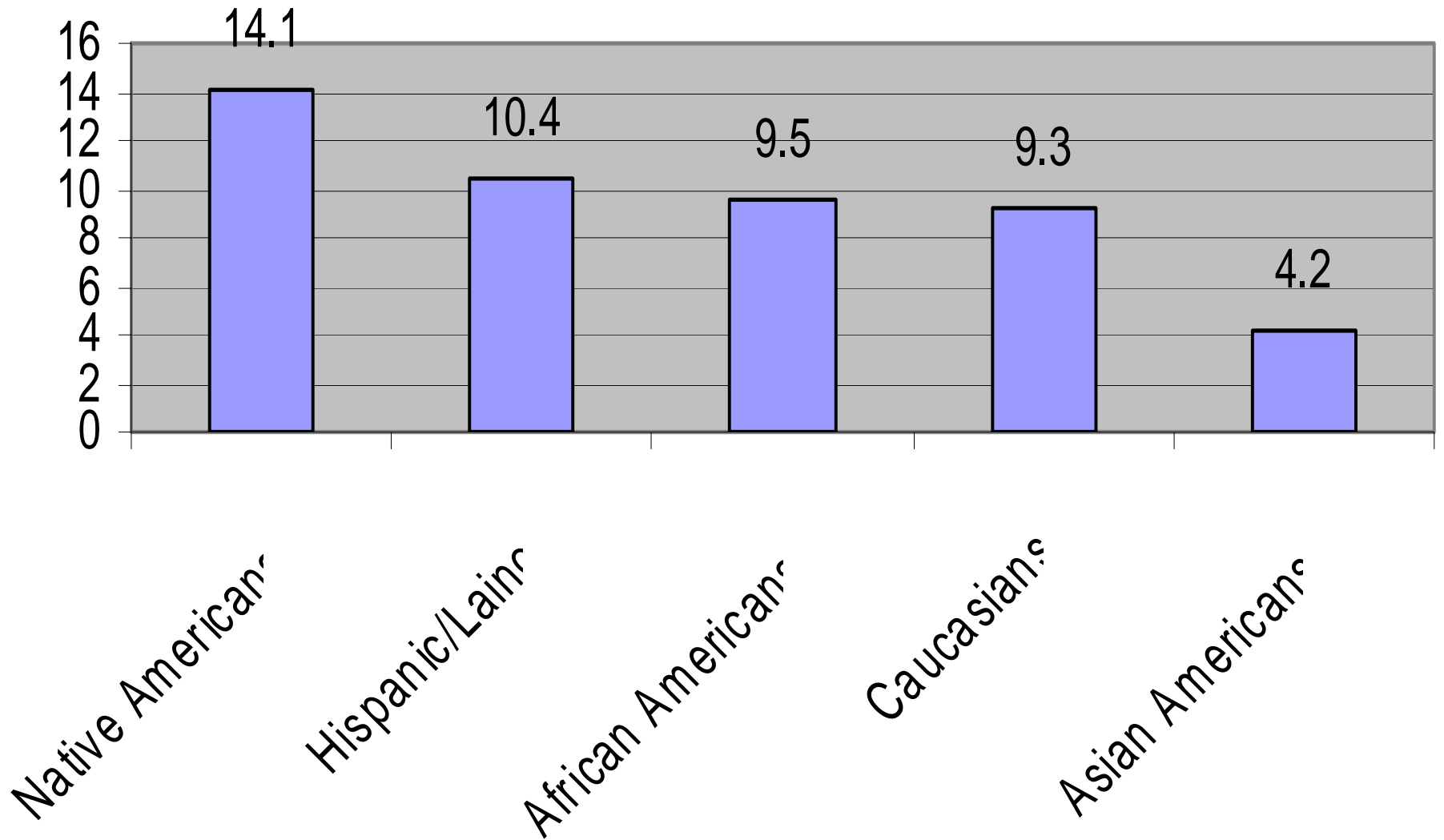


Social Realities are often not clear

- Assumptions of who uses, who has a problem, and the cause/effect of that problem are often clouded by these assumptions.
- A study out of Washington DC found that more than 9 out of 10 individuals provided the same answer to the question “what does a drug user look like?”

(Burston, Jones and Roberson-Saunders, 1995)

Substance Abuse/Dependence by Race



Vulnerabilities

- All active substance users by definition are vulnerable
- Research done with individuals with substance use disorders, who are also dealing with the effects of other social realities places these individuals at extreme vulnerability.
- Drug users and those with a history of drug use rarely have a real voice in the creation of research, or programs and policies designed to serve them.

Research with Vulnerable Populations

- Most medical research, and substance use research in particular, is done with vulnerable urban populations
- Why
 - Access
 - Substance of choice
 - Geography
 - Who is willing to participate
- Skews data and findings, often reinforcing assumptions

National Data on Drug Use

- DAWN (Emergency room data in 20 cities)
<http://oas.samhsa.gov>
- DASIS (Drug treatment data) <http://oas.samhsa.gov>
- National Survey on Drug Use and Health (Nat'l Survey)
<http://oas.samhsa.gov>
- DEA (status reports) <http://www.dea.gov/>
- CEWG, NIDA (Scientists in 21 cities meet semi-annually)
<http://www.nida.nih.gov/about/organization/cewg/Reports.html>
- CDC clearinghouse for reports
<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/datawh.htm>

Overlap with HIV risk

- *Injection Drug Use*: Sharing of syringes and other injection equipment is a well established risk behavior for contracting HIV
- *The Drug Trade*: Use of drugs can contribute to the spread of the epidemic when users trade sex for drugs or money,
- *Immediate Effects of Drug Use*: when drug users engage in risky sexual behaviors that they might not engage in when not under the influence, or
- *Long-term Effects of Drug Use*: when use and using behaviors effect access to health care services

The Future

- As we trudge the road to happy destiny and begin to investigate the intersection of HIV/AIDS and substance abuse
- The question remains how do we take not just drug use, but also drug users seriously