

Drug Facts Week Message Timely with Death of Amy Winehouse

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Amy Winehouse, the former Grammy award-winning artist who had a very public battle with substance use disorder and her use of several illicit and licit substances, died in July of this year. Last week, however, the long awaited cause of Amy Winehouse's death was disclosed at a coroner's court in London. The findings show that Amy had died from her use of alcohol, not from the illicit substances which were the focus of much media attention. Her tragic and unfortunate loss serves to educate us that there is no "safe drug". Every time someone takes an addictive substance whether it be alcohol or cocaine, tobacco or ecstasy, there are significant risks that need to be understood.

Unfortunately, our society has focused its attention in regards to the dangers of addiction according to cultural misperceptions. This non-scientific view has allowed for the desensitization of the real dangers of legal drugs such as alcohol and tobacco, or prescription drugs which as a result of being improperly used is resulting in an alarming rise in the use of opiates.

Seeking to spread the message that all drugs carry risks and are harmful to the body, President Obama's Administration for the second year in a row is holding "Drug Facts Week" from October 31st through November 6th. The weeklong event will seek to connect teens with scientifically proven facts about drugs and substance use disorder. Last year's successful Drug Facts Week saw over 100 community events and discussions between teens and scientists. The official website, <http://drugfactsweek.drugabuse.gov/> hosts several online and interactive tools which offer factual information as well as empower teens and adults to organize and promote their own Drug Facts Week event.

According to NJAMHAA CEO, Debra Wentz, Ph.D., "Misusing legal drugs such as bona fide prescriptions, can be equally harmful as the use of illegal substances. It is time for an open and honest discussion about the real facts of the dangers of all drugs (legal including prescriptions and illegal) so that we can move forward with the business of helping people into recovery. We do not want create a false sense of safety about a drug just because it is not prohibited or because a doctor prescribed it."

NJAMHAA wishes to extend its deepest sympathies to the family of Amy Winehouse.