

NIDA raises the curtain on addiction

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The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) announced today the launch of its Addiction Performance Project, an innovative continued medical education program designed to help primary care providers break down the stigma associated with addiction. The program includes dramatic interpretation of a family's struggle with addiction, followed by a dialogue among participants aimed to foster compassion, cooperation, and understanding for patients living with this disease.

Of the 23.5 million patients who needed specialized treatment for a drug or alcohol problem in 2009, nearly 90 percent had not received it. Research suggests that primary care providers could significantly help reduce drug use, before it escalates to abuse or addiction. However, many express concern that they do not have the experience or tools to identify drug use in their patients.

"Primary care providers can play such a vital role in screening for drug abuse, said NIDA Director Dr. Nora D. Volkow. "Yet, for many providers, discussing [drug abuse](#) with their patients is beyond their comfort zone. NIDA's Addiction Performance Project is a creative way for doctors to earn CME credit while breaking down the stigma associated with drug addiction."

Each performance begins with a dramatic reading of Act III of Eugene O'Neill's Long Day's Journey into Night. The Washington, D.C., launch performance took place this past Saturday, featuring Blythe Danner reading the part of Mary Tyrone, the morphine-addicted matriarch of a family devastated by addiction, and Harris Yulin as James Tyrone,

Mary's husband.

Readings are followed by an expert panel reaction and facilitated audience discussion that fosters compassion, cooperation, and understanding for addicted patients and their families. Expert panelists for the D.C. performance included NIDA Director Nora D. Volkow, M.D., Jeffrey Baxter, M.D., of the University of Massachusetts Medical School and Dr. Robert Taylor, M.D., the dean of Howard University Medical School, Washington, D.C.

[Addiction](#) Performance Project is part of NIDAMED, NIDA's outreach to practicing physicians, physicians in training, and other health professionals. It has a limited run during 2011 and 2012, with the next scheduled performance in Phoenix, Ariz. on May 6.

Performances are free, but seating is limited, and registration is recommended. Attendees do not have to be registrants at the conferences where some performances take place.

Provided by National Institutes of Health

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