

Abstract

Potential exposure to anti-drug advertising and drug-related attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors among United States youth, 1995-2006

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Using nationally representative data from the Monitoring the Future Study on United States middle and high school students, we related exposure to anti-drug television advertising as measured by Nielsen Media Research ratings points to student self-reported drug-related outcomes from 1995 to 2006. Multivariate analyses controlling for key socio-demographics and accounting for the complex survey design included 337,918 cases. Results indicated that attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors regarding substance use were significantly related to such advertising exposure over the six months prior to the date the youth were surveyed. However, the observed relationships varied by grade level, over time and by advertising tagline and marijuana focus. Findings differed markedly between middle and high school students across the study interval. One factor that may partially explain observed differences may be variation in the degree to which the ads focused on marijuana. Putting a concerted effort into increasing anti-drug advertising will likely increase the exposure to and recall of such ads among youth. However, the likelihood that such advertising will result in youth being less likely to use drugs seems to depend heavily on the type of advertising utilized and how it relates to different ages and characteristics of targeted youth.

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