



Cocaine Addiction: Theory, Research, and Treatment

By Jerome J. Platt



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It inspired written testimonials from William McKinley, Thomas Edison, and Sarah Bernhardt; merited a medal from Pope Leo XIII; produced "exhilaration and lasting euphoria" in Sigmund Freud. Once the stimulant of choice of the enlightened and the elite, cocaine has become, a century later, a plague, ravaging the lives of millions. This book is the first to draw together all the facts about this pervasive drug--from its natural occurrence in a tea-like native South American plant to its devastating appearance as crack in the inner cities of the United States.

Drawing on the latest work in medicine, psychiatry, neuroscience, pharmacology, epidemiology, social work, and sociology, the volume is a highly accessible reference on the history and use of cocaine, its physical and psychological effects, and the etiology and epidemiology of cocaine addiction. It also provides a critical evaluation of the pharmaceutical agents and psychosocial interventions that have been used to treat this addiction. Author Jerome J. Platt answers such basic questions as: What is cocaine? What forms does it come in? How is it administered? What does it do? What are the medical complications of cocaine addiction? What are the treatments, and how successful are they?

Uniquely comprehensive, *Cocaine Addiction* makes all the latest information on this urgent subject readily available to medical professionals and practitioners, social workers and scholars, and anyone who cares to know more about this perennially troubling drug.



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Editorial Review

From The New England Journal of Medicine

Over a century ago, the active ingredient in the coca leaf was purified, and the first cases of cocaine dependence were described in North America and Western Europe. Overlooked for many years, cocaine resurfaced as a public health problem in the 1980s. Today, among the major addictions, cocaine dependence remains the most elusive. Alcohol, opiates, and nicotine all produce characteristic withdrawal syndromes, which respond to treatment with pharmacologic agonists or sympatholytic agents. For cocaine, the withdrawal syndrome is more evanescent, and its treatment implications remain unclear. For alcohol, opiate, and nicotine dependence, a growing list of medications is available to help induce remission or prevent relapse, including the aversive agent disulfiram, the long-acting opiate agonist methadone, the long-acting opiate antagonist naltrexone, and nicotine-replacement therapies with patch and gum delivery systems. Recent advances include naltrexone for alcoholism, the long-acting agonist levomethadyl acetate hydrochloride for opiate dependence, and the antidepressant bupropion for smoking cessation. Cocaine has yet to yield to agonist, antagonist, or antidepressant strategies, although intensive work is ongoing, and there have been hints. Several psychotherapeutic and behavioral strategies have shown promise. This progress and the development of effective medications for the other addictions reinforce the importance of the research effort in this area and inspire confidence that it will continue to bear fruit.

Cocaine Addiction, by Jerome Platt, is a compendium of research on cocaine to date. The author has admirably tackled the task of organizing and summarizing over a thousand references from the scientific and clinical literature. This is not a book primarily about the basic neurobiology and pharmacology of cocaine. Rather, the focus is predominantly clinical. Within that broad limit all essential aspects are covered, including history, pharmacology, clinical features, epidemiology, associated psychopathology, medical complications, and nonpharmacologic and pharmacologic treatment approaches. An entire chapter is devoted to cocaine and sexual behavior, unusual for a book of this type, but important given the role of drug abuse in the human immunodeficiency virus epidemic. Throughout, the emphasis is on detailed description of research studies and review papers. This enhances the usefulness of this book as a reference, although in the midst of some sections it is hard to keep track of the gist. Most chapters end with conclusion sections that provide succinct summaries and criticisms, and I recommend reviewing the conclusions first before embarking on each chapter.

The single-authored format has the advantage of a consistent style and the absence of either duplication or large gaps in coverage. However, it would be difficult for any one author to be intimately familiar with all the literatures reviewed in a book of this scope, and indeed some sections are not sufficiently critical of the studies reviewed. For example, the chapter on pharmacotherapy conveys an overly optimistic impression of the efficacy of several medications based on the results of small, preliminary studies. In several cases these results have not been confirmed in larger, well-controlled clinical trials published recently. It is a general limitation of this book that there are few references beyond 1994. Nevertheless, Cocaine Addiction provides a solid guide to the literature that will be useful to newcomers and as a reference for experienced hands. The study of cocaine abuse is a nascent field lacking clear consensus in many areas. Serious students may, at points, wish to visit the primary references identified in this book and reach their own conclusions.

Reviewed by Edward Nunes, M.D.

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Review

Dr. Platt has written a comprehensive review of the English-language literature on cocaine abuse...His scholarship is impressive; he has reviewed more than 1,000 articles covering cocaine's history, use, pharmacology, behavioral effects, psychopathological and medical aspects, and treatment of abuse...Dr. Platt is an able writer and a talented summarizer. (William R. Flynn *American Journal of Psychiatry*)

Historians still know far too little about the history of narcotics and their wider personal, clinical and social implications, and hence Jerome Platt's account is to be welcomed...In highly readable prose, yet with an abundance of scientific evidence, Platt discusses all dimensions of the psychosocial effects and implications of cocaine use. (*Medical History [UK]*)

Cocaine Addiction will be the definitive reference text on cocaine for many years to come. Jerome Platt's scholarship is first rate and he does not fall into the trap of forcing resolution to the many cases where the research findings are contradictory. There is simply no comparable reference work which examines systematically the many domains of knowledge which are increasingly coming to have research evidence, if not current clinical relevance. (Edward C. Senay, M.D.)

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