

Breaking the Cycle of Drug Abuse and Binge Eating



Mark West
Professor of Psychology

CURRENT RESEARCH

Studying the brain mechanisms behind drug addiction and overconsumption of sweet, fatty food

According to the [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\)](#), in 2013, 16.5 million Americans reported heavy drinking of alcohol; 55.8 million were current cigarette smokers; and 24.6 million were current illicit drug users. [Abuse](#) of tobacco, alcohol, and illicit drugs exacts \$700B annually in costs related to crime, lost work productivity, and healthcare. A closely related national health problem involves [4.2%](#) of females who endure bulimia nervosa, while up to 5% of Americans experience binge eating disorder. Dr. Mark West, Professor of Psychology at Rutgers University, uses animal models to study the neural bases of cocaine addiction, for which there is no FDA-approved medication, and binge eating. Understanding the neural mechanisms and cognitive or emotional processes associated with these disorders could help identify both the changes in the brain resulting from addictive behaviors as well as therapies to help millions of affected individuals combat them. Treatment strategies are improving, and the goal of Dr. West's research is continued improvement through better understanding of the underlying mechanisms.

Fortunately, scientific advances have revealed where brain mechanisms are likely to be found. Addictive psychological disorders involving substance abuse and binge eating are acquired because these activities trigger heightened dopamine release in the brain's reward/motivation...

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AFFILIATION



EDUCATION

- Ph.D. in Physiology 1982, Wake Forest University School of Medicine
- B.S. in Biological Sciences in 1976, University of California, Irvine

AWARDS

- Rutgers University Graduate Teaching Award, 2013
- FIRST Award, National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1987-1992
- Honorable Discharge, Specialist 4, United States Army, Vietnam

RESEARCH AREAS

Health & Wellness, Alcoholism, Addiction, Substance Abuse Research

FUNDING REQUEST

Your contributions will support Dr. Mark West and his team at Rutgers University as they study the neural bases of drug addiction and binge eating. The lab typically operates on \$200-250K/year. Hiring more personnel would enhance productivity and further advance the research. Donations will help fund not only the traditional operating costs, travel, other equipment and resources, but also the \$70K/year required to support an additional, doctoral-level person. Help find ways to combat drug addiction and binge eating; fund Dr. West's research.