Sunrise Health & Wellness of Toledo Releases a Study That Shows Impact of Social Interactions on Addictive Behavior

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A new study published in Nature Neuroscience finds that social interactions can have a profound effect on behaviors related to addiction, and on the brain?s response to drug-associated cues. These findings have implications for people with substance use disorders (SUDs), because it suggests that social interaction can change the activity of specific neuronal circuits that control drug craving and relapse. The research was funded by the National Institutes of Health and led by Dr. Marco Venniro from the Intramural Research Program of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).

The researchers used established animal models of drug addiction to show that when given a choice, rats repeatedly chose social interaction over self-administration of heroin or methamphetamine. This held true even for rats that had previously been using heroin or methamphetamine in a ?compulsive? way (like humans with an SUD).

Additionally, all rats robustly chose peer contact over more drug access even when they were continuously housed with their peers. And during prolonged abstinence periods, Sunrise Health & Wellness reported

they were significantly less vulnerable to relapse than rats that simply had their access to drugs removed. However, some rats resumed drug taking when access to a peer was delayed. The study introduces a novel paradigm to study brain mechanisms of social factors in addiction and could lead to new behavioral and pharmacological treatments for SUDs.

The protective effects of social interaction are more straightforward for rats than for people, but even so, the new findings in rats are in accord with what social scientists have reported for decades -- feelings of connectedness to society can protect some (not all) people against SUDs. The rats that are less strongly protected by social contact could be a model for understanding and treating their human counterparts.

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Our programs are all about helping you find the right people to get treatment from. We can connect you with the top rehab centers from across the country.

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