

# CRACK STORIES FROM THE STATES

## A mythology in the making

**What US agent Stutman told Britain's chief constables about crack 'scared the hell' out of them. It also alarmed our Home Secretary and was uncritically regurgitated in lurid tabloid news splashes. Here's part of what he said.**

**6** IN THE PAST three and a half years crack has gone from a drug which was virtually unheard of in the largest city in the United States to a major drug of abuse in 49 out of the 50 states.

Crack is an equal opportunity drug. It does affect blacks, whites, Hispanics. It affects rich, poor and in-between and it has left the ghetto in United States and it has gone on to suburban America. It is truly a drug that has taken over our society and changed the face of our society.

Crack, unlike heroin, is a drug that affects females as much as males. Of all the crack addicts we have seen, about 50 per cent are female. Now what does that mean? In the United States most inner city families are run by women. These are the same women who today are becoming crack addicts.

Therefore, the last vestiges of family in the inner city, certainly in New York and most other major cities in the United States, are beginning to disappear. That's one of the major reasons why we are now seeing crack addicts in New York, 10, 11, and 12 years of age. The number of reported child abuse cases in New York City has gone from 2200 in 1986 to 8000 in 1988. Almost all of them are the children of cocaine/crack using parents.

And one figure, which I think is absolutely frightening, is that last year in New York City, of all of the children who died because of battering — where parents literally beat their kids to death — 73 per cent were the children of

cocaine/crack using parents. It is a drug that produces violence.

A study that will be released by the Cocaine Hotline in the United States proves beyond reasonable doubt that the drug itself causes violence. You don't necessarily need a person with a predisposition to violence. In a survey of 17,000 crack users in the United States, the Cocaine Hotline is going to point out that 47 per cent had been involved, under the influence of crack, in a physical fight, 35 per cent in assaults with weapons, 12 per cent in child abuse, and 1 per cent had actually been involved in murders.

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*Seventy-five per cent of people  
who try crack three times become  
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That is a drug unlike any other drug that we have ever seen which produces those kind of numbers.

Now, what is crack? It is nothing more or less than smoking cocaine. So why does it produce this feeling that cocaine doesn't necessarily produce? One very simple reason is that smoking is the most efficient method of getting the drug to the brain. That's the only difference between cocaine hydrochloride and crack.

### Crack's appeal to the kids

So why did the cocaine epidemic hit us all of a sudden? For a very simple reason: we believed our own garbage. We told ourselves it was relatively harmless, we told ourselves it certainly was not addicting and everybody believed it, so they tried it.

We now know that crack is the single most addicting drug available in the United States of America today and certainly the most addicting

drug available in Europe. Heroin is not even in the same ballpark.

A study that will be released in the next two to three weeks will probably say that of all of those people who tried crack three or more times, 75 per cent will become physically addicted at the end of the third time. It is pointed out now that in most treatment centres in New York City the average crack addict is addicted within five weeks of first use.

Right now in the United States crack is considered a virtually incurable addiction. No treatment centres show any long term remission of any statistically significant number of crack addicts. Yet it is a drug that of those people who try it three times, 75 per cent become addicted. You don't have to be a mathematician to figure out you've got a hell of a problem when you've got a drug like that.

Now let me take it one step further. If I wanted to design a drug that I'm going to market to kids, I couldn't improve on crack. Let me tell you why.

It is a very expensive drug but sold in very, very small amounts so it is relatively inexpensive. Before the advent of crack if a kid in New York wanted to buy cocaine he had to lay out about \$80 for a gram. Those were the smallest amounts it was sold in.

Today you could purchase crack for as little as \$3 to \$4 a phial. Is that cheaper than the \$80? Really not, for the very simple reason that that \$3-\$4 worth lasts only 8 to 10 minutes. It is three to four times more expensive than hydrochloride, but at least the kid doesn't have to lay out a lot of money at one time. Any kid in the United States can come up with \$5 or \$10.

The second reason that crack has become so popular in our country is that the method of ingestion is so non-intrusive. No needles stuck in your arm, you don't even have to stick a white powder up your nose. Who does that, nobody,

*Robert Stutman is a US Drug Enforcement Administration special agent working in New York. This article is edited extracts of an address he gave to the Association of Chief Police Officers' drugs conference this April.*



