Pediatric endocrinology is the theme of this issue of *Pediatric Annals*, with a series of excellent articles guest edited by Dianne Deplewski, MD, from the Departments of Pediatrics and Medicine at my alma mater, the University of Chicago. This group of papers provides a review of concepts very useful for pediatric practitioners and related to the kinds of issues encountered in primary care. An additional article, entitled “Cannabis and the Adolescent Brain,” by Robert J. Hilt, MD, FAAP, deals with this critically important modern epidemic. From this, I learned that adolescent marijuana use carries health risks different from those seen in adult users, specifically an increased risk of long-term psychosis and schizophrenia (rather than transient issues) in adolescents.

RESULTS OF DRUG ABUSE

The tragic death in early February of the magnificent 46-year-old actor, Philip Seymour Hoffman (one Academy Award, four Academy Award nominations and three Tony Award nominations), has focused new attention on heroin overdose deaths. In 2010, there were 3,036 heroin overdose deaths in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an impressive increase from the 1,960 recorded deaths in 1999. However, 22,134 individuals died in 2010 from overdoses of prescription pharmaceutical drugs, almost tripling the 7,523 such deaths in 1999.

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One key message for pediatric care providers is to understand that, for adolescents, heavy prolonged marijuana use can have more long-term consequences than we perhaps have understood previously. It is therefore important to ensure that our adolescent patients are fully aware of the potential consequences of heavy use of this drug.

THIS MONTH’S STAMPS

I have selected two unusual stamps that relate to a condition we all see, Down syndrome. Both the Turkish souvenir sheet and the Romanian stamp were issued March 21, 2013 (3/21 - get it?) to honor World Down Syndrome Day. The Turkish sheet of three stamps shows a chromosome 21 and double helix DNA, and both show children with...
the facial characteristics of this most common chromosomal abnormality in humans (occurring in one out of every 800–1,000 births). World Down Syndrome Day is celebrated each year on March 21 to increase global awareness and is sanctioned by the United Nations and supported by Down Syndrome International. It emphasizes human rights, inclusion, and well-being of those with Down syndrome. This day originated in Geneva, Switzerland, in 2006, and the United Nations is holding the Third World Down Syndrome Day Conference on March 21, 2014, in New York City at United Nations headquarters.

Down syndrome was described by the British physician John Langdon Down in his 1862 and 1866 publications. Earlier partial descriptions were contributed by the Frenchmen, Jean-Etienne Esquirol (1838) and Edouard Seguin (1844). The genetic basis of Down syndrome, trisomy 21, was characterized in 1959 by Jerome Lejeune in France. Only in 2014 were the long-overlooked major contributions of Marthe Gautier (now 88 years old) to this achievement recognized and formally honored.