This September issue of *Psychiatric Annals*, guest edited by Alkesh N. Patel, MD, features intricate cases of addiction involving methamphetamine, alcohol, opioids in chronic pain patients, as well as anabolic-androgenic steroid use.

These case presentations present valuable information in the management of patients afflicted by these addictions. Lada Alexeenko, MD and colleagues (see page 395) present a case of potential methamphetamine addiction while exploring the complexities behind the interpretation of urine toxicology tests, and discussing possible pharmacologic and behavioral treatment options in conjunction with those findings. Roy C. Jerome, PhD and colleagues (see page 399) describe the multidisciplinary management of major depression in a methamphetamine-addicted, HIV-positive young man.

A very relevant case presentation by Dr. Patel (see page 403) describes the management issues raised by the interface of chronic pain patients and opioid addiction. Belal Hegazy, MD and Corneliu Sanda, MD (see page 408) discuss the dangerous physical and psychiatric downside of anabolic-androgenic steroid use. Michel Ng, NP and colleagues (see page 412) explore the complex case of a patient with hepatitis C, comorbid alcohol use and worsening end-stage liver disease.

Virtually all addictive substances and behaviors act through their effect on short-circuiting the brains’ pleasure system by promoting dopamine release. Since most healthy pleasures, including listening to music¹ as well other creative activities, including physical exercise are associated with dopamine release,²,³ we have to ask why people need to partake in various substances or addictive behaviors?

Recent findings of an area of gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA)-releasing interneurons that have the capacity to “brake” dopamine system function under stressful conditions,⁴ and the possibility of genetic differences in the control of dopamine function suggest why some individuals may resort to drugs or addictive behaviors to stimulate their brains’ reward systems, while others simply enjoy creative lives. There is evidence that physical and creative activity may reduce our likelihood of addiction.²,³ What an amazing mechanism it is that colors our life experience. The nature of how we experience our lives depends on how we manage our reward system — or ultimately, how we let it direct us.

**REFERENCES**