A NEW STUDY conducted by scientists at UB’s Research Institute on Addictions (RIA) suggests that most parents are aware of and accurately evaluate the extent of their teenager’s cigarette smoking, marijuana use, drinking and overall substance use.

The scientists also found that parents were less likely to be aware of their children’s use (especially younger teens’ use) if they themselves had personal problems or were using alcohol more frequently. Also, in cases where parents provided lower estimates of substance use, they were nearly twice as likely to underestimate frequency of marijuana use and quantity of alcohol use.

The study was funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse and published in the July 2007 issue of the Journal of Child and Adolescent Substance Abuse.

What is novel about its findings is that, for the first time, it provides detailed statistics about parental knowledge of teen substance use for families in which the teen’s substance use is causing the parent stress, but the teen is not necessarily in treatment. Previous studies have been restricted to families with a teen in substance use issues.

It seems that, despite a few exceptions, many parents do know the extent of their teenager’s substance use. Parents can use this knowledge to help themselves cope with teenage substance use and the resulting stress on the family, as well as to begin conversations with their teen about making changes.

For a six-month reporting period, 82 percent of parents in the RIA study accurately reported the presence of their teen’s marijuana use. However, only 72 percent of the parents in the RIA study accurately reported the presence of illicit drug use (other than marijuana) by teens.

“This study begins to dispel the notion that parents don’t know the extent to which their teens are using cigarettes, alcohol and illicit drugs,” says lead researcher Neil B. McGillicuddy, PhD. “It seems that, despite a few exceptions, many parents do know the extent of their teenager’s substance use. Parents can use this knowledge to help themselves cope with teenage substance use and the resulting stress on the family, as well as to begin conversations with their teen about making changes.

“What we would hope people come away with from this study,” he continues, “is that parents can be more aware of their teen’s substance use by reducing their own alcohol use, giving more attention to what their teen is doing 24/7, particularly if the teen is younger, and taking steps to reduce their own psychological distress. Participation in parenting programs, especially those geared toward coping with an adolescent’s substance use, can give the parent important skills to deal with teen behavior and have been found to reduce the parent’s distress.”

McGillicuddy’s colleagues on the study were Robert G. Rychtarik, PhD, RIA senior research scientist and research associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry in the UB School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, Elizabeth T. Morshheimer, EdM, senior academic advisor with UB’s Student Advising Services; and Michelle R. Burke-Storer, MS, of the Urban Institute in Washington, DC.

To learn more about this study, its methodology and results, visit the UB NewsCenter website at www.buffalo.edu/news and search “McGillicuddy.”

I wish you a happy (and healthy) new year on behalf of the Medical Alumni Association! As we enter 2008, the governing board is working hard to develop new programs that will serve the mission of the medical school as well as foster collaboration between alumni, students, faculty, residents and other university groups.

We are in the process of developing a Research Mentoring Program to provide greater research opportunities for current medical students. Many medical students have increased interest in research opportunities and the need for research experience that will enable them to compete for top residency programs. It is our hope that the mentoring program will lead to enhanced opportunity, exposure and interest in research for our medical students, thus strengthening their skills and expertise when applying for residency.

Additionally, as our students continue to identify a residency program, we are working on an alumni HOST program. We have begun recruiting alumni throughout the country to “host” a medical student while they are interviewing for their residency program or in town to learn more about postgraduate work or employment opportunities. Host alumni may support a student in a variety of ways that includes providing housing for a night or transportation to or from the airport, to an interview, or a tour of the city. As many of you know, finding a residency program can be a costly endeavor and we are excited about being able to offer support to our students during this time.

Finally, in an effort to help recruit UB students into our residency programs and retain physicians here in Western New York, we have changed the format of Community Physician Lunches. We have teamed up with UB department chairs and current residents of those departments to talk to medical students about the residency programs at UB medical school and life as a resident in Western New York. Special thanks to the Departments of Surgery and Family Medicine for their participation. We hope our students find this format helpful and once they learn about the great residency programs available here, they make UB their number one choice come Match Day.

If you are a faculty member who would welcome the opportunity to mentor a medical student in research, or if you are an alumni/alumna interested in becoming a HOST member, we welcome you and your ideas. Please call Jennifer Lobaug, director of special events and constituent relations at the medical school at 1-877-826-3246 or (716) 828-2773, or e-mail jlobaug@buffalo.edu.

Last year, for alumni who are celebrating a reunion in 2008, Reunion Weekend and Spring Clinical Day is May 2–3 in Buffalo. In response to popular demand, it is my pleasure to announce that Dr. Michael Roizen, author of You: Staying Young, will return as the lecturer for Spring Clinical Day. He will discuss his bestselling book, You: Staying Young. As a preview to his talk, I encourage you to discover your “real age” by visiting www.realage.com. Please see page 47 for all reunion weekend event details.

As always, we welcome your feedback, so please feel free to e-mail me.

Sincerely,

Helen M. Cappuccino, MD ’88
President, Medical Alumni Association
HelenC@MedAlumni.buffalo.edu

P.S. – Membership keeps our alumni and student programs thriving, so please remember to join at www.medicalalumni.buffalo.edu/member.html.
The Medical Alumni Association presents Spring Clinical Day on Saturday, May 3, 2008, at the Buffalo Niagara Marriott Hotel. The program, sponsored by the Harrington Lecture Endowment, will be held in conjunction with Reunion Weekend and will feature keynote speaker Michael F. Roizen, MD, back by popular demand.

Roizen, who is author of the New York Times’ bestseller RealAge, will return to present “YOU: Staying Young.” In 1999, RealAge was awarded the Best Wellness Book of the Year by the Books for a Better Life Awards. His three subsequent books have also been bestsellers.

Roizen completed his residency in internal medicine at Harvard’s Beth Israel Hospital, after which he served a tour of duty in the Public Health Service at the National Institutes of Health working in the laboratory of Irv Kopin and Nobel Prize–winner Julius Axelrod. He is certified by both the American Board of Internal Medicine and the American Board of Anesthesiology.

He has published more than 150 peer-reviewed scientific papers, 100 textbook chapters, 30 editorials and four medical books, including a medical bestseller. He has received 12 U.S. patents and several foreign patents.

Currently Roizen serves as chair of the Division of Anesthesiology, Critical Care Management, and Comprehensive Pain Management at the Cleveland Clinic.

Visit www.realage.com to find out what “real age” is all about.
Visit www.medicalalumni.buffalo.edu for more details about this year’s program.