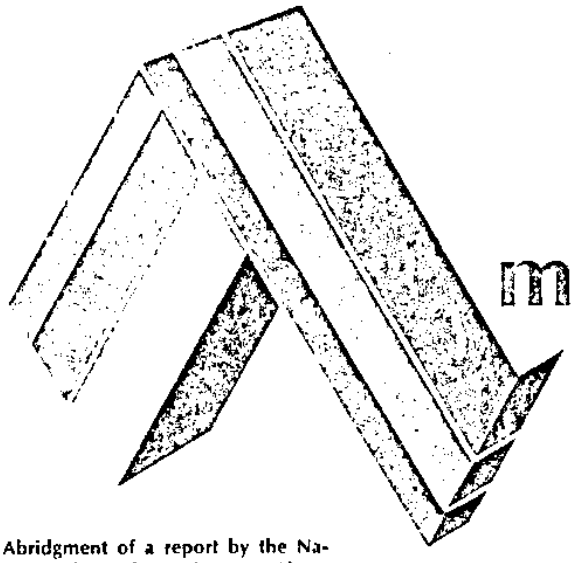

Amphetamine

Abridgment of a report by the National Clearinghouse for Drug Abuse Information (Series 28, No. 1, 1974)

The National Clearinghouse for Drug Abuse Information *operates as a central source for the collection and dissemination of drug abuse information within the Federal Government and serves as a coordinating information agency for groups throughout the country working in drug abuse programs. Since its establishment in 1970, the Clearinghouse has developed an information dissemination service; a publications development program; computer files of resource and program information; and a national network of local drug abuse information centers. These activities are designed to provide current factual drug abuse information to the public on request. Inquiries should be directed to the National Clearinghouse for Drug Abuse Information, P.O. Box 1908, Rockville, Maryland 20850.*

Amphetamine is part of a chemical "family" which includes methamphetamine, dextroamphetamine, and other drugs. Its best known major effects include the dilation of the bronchial passages, appetite depression, the relief of fatigue, and the stimulation of the central nervous system (CNS). Some of the undesirable side effects at high dose levels include insomnia, stomach disorders, cardiac arrhythmia, and, more rarely, paranoid psychosis.

Amphetamine was first synthesized in 1887; the first significant investigation into its pharmacology, or therapeutic possibilities, was performed in 1927. At that time, Gordon Alles, a California pharmacologist, prepared a number of phenylalkylamine compounds in an effort to find a synthetic substitute for ephedrine, a drug derived from various plants and used for treating asthma. Alles' research led to his receipt of the patent for the drug in 1932. In exchange for royalties on sales, he assigned the patent to Smith, Kline, and French Laboratories which used the drug in the Benzedrine® inhaler to aid in dilating the bronchial passages.

Most of the other major effects of the drug were discovered during the 1930's. In 1937, amphetamine became available as a prescription tablet. It was used to treat narcolepsy—a disease producing an uncontrollable urge to sleep—and, paradoxically, to alleviate the hyperactive syndrome of children. As clinical use continued, amphetamine's effects as an appetite suppressant and a stimulant became known.