TV report finds cocaine use among young professionals

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Use of cocaine is pervasive among young professionals in Baton Rouge, including the legal community, which seems to do little about policing its own, according to a television documentary scheduled to air Tuesday night.

The documentary is part of week-long series that began Monday on WBRZ-TV, Channel 2, concerning cocaine use in Baton Rouge.

"The legal community has largely ignored the problem of drug abuse," reporter John Camp says in the hour-long documentary that begins at 7 p.m. Tuesday.

The program questioned District Attorney Ossie Brown's record on prosecuting cocaine cases, citing in particular a recent cocaine case that involves some of Brown's past business associates.

Brown, however, on camera defended his offices' performance as second to none.

"Our office probably has the most aggressive record of going against distributors or pushers of cocaine or any other illegal drugs than any office in the state or in the country as far as that goes," he said.

The program probes the arrests of Glenn D'Spain, Kraemer Diel and Claude Pennington III in connection with a cocaine case that has become the subject of a federal grand jury investigation into how Brown's office handled the case.

D'Spain's father and Pennington helped finance a business owned by Brown, former mayor aide David Bourland and Civil Defense Director Larry Gobbens.

Federal authorities say they are curious why a parish grand jury did not issue charges in connection with the case.

The documentary includes interviews with local attorneys, businessmen and other professionals who describe their cocaine abuse.

One businessman claimed that he and his associates often laid out lines of cocaine to snort to get in the mood to do business.

"As bizarre as that sounds, a lot of times, that's exactly what happened," the man said. "The best salesmen always had the best cocaine."

One attorney admitted to being in court many times under the influence of drugs, and seemed critical of his colleagues who did not report his use.

According to the show, professional groups such as the Louisianana Bar Association have been slow to recognize the drug problem growing among their ranks.

The Louisiana Supreme Court seldom takes action against attorneys for drug abuse, the show says.

Dr. Mark Gold, a cocaine expert who runs a national hotline on the drug, said physicians and persons in the financial industry also rank high on the list of people who are problem users of cocaine.

Dr. Louis Cataldie, Medical Director of the Silkworth Center, a local chemical dependency facility, said that physicians, because of their knowledge of drugs, may feel that they will be able to recognize when their use becomes dangerous.

"But that's not necessarily the situation," added Cataldie, who himself successfully underwent treatment for chemical dependency several years ago.

He also said that the medical community sometimes does not always recognize when a problem exists with one of its members.

"When the family gets sick and doesn't realize that there is a problem, the colleagues prefer to deny that the person happens to be sick," he said.