

Alcoholism and Drug Dependence



wiseGEEK

INTRODUCTION

Drug:

Drug is defined as *"any substance that, when taken into the living organism, may modify one or more of its functions"*. (WHO)

Drug abuse:

It is defined as, *"self administration of a drug for non- medical reasons, in quantities and frequencies which may impair an individual's ability to function effectively and which may result in social, physical or emotional harm"*.

Drug Dependence

“a state, psychic and sometimes also physical, resulting from the interaction between a living organism and a drug, characterized by behavioral and other responses that always include a compulsion to take the drug on a continuous or periodic basis in order to experience its psychic effect and sometimes to avoid the discomfort”.



The Problem

- An estimated 12-20 million people smoke marijuana in the US.
- 30-50 per cent of all high school students had made marijuana an accepted part of life.
- Experience in Sweden indicates that drug dependence has reached a peak in the age-group 12-20 years .


Epidemiology

Agent Factor :

Dependence-producing Drug

A *dependence producing drug* is one that has the capacity to produce “dependence”.

The specific characteristics of dependence varies with the type of drug involved. ICD-10 recognizes the following psychoactive drugs, or drug classes, the self administration of which may produce mental and behavioral disorders, including dependence :

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1. Alcohol
 2. Opioids and Cannabinoids
 3. Tobacco
 4. Volatile solvents
 5. Other psycho-active substances,
and drugs from different classes
used in combination

Alcohol

- By pharmacological definition, alcohol is a drug and may be classified as a sedative, tranquillizer, hypnotic or anaesthetic, depending on the quantity consumed.
- Of all the drugs, *alcohol is the only drug whose self-induced intoxication is socially accepted.*
- Over the past 30-40 yrs, increasing percentage of young people have started to drink.
- Alcohol consumption has increased in quantity and frequency and the age at which drinking starts has declined.

- WHO (2008) has estimated that there are about 2 billion people worldwide who consume alcoholic beverages and 76.3 million with disorders arising out of harmful use of alcohol.
- An estimated 2.3 million people die from alcohol-related causes which is 3.7% of all the deaths.
- Also 64.9 million DALYs are lost due to alcohol related causes.
- In India, survey showed that around 20-30% of adult males and around 5% of adult females use alcohol.

- Issues of concern include pay-day drinking, violence including domestic violence, alcohol's contribution to poverty, illicit and home-brewed alcohol, and reduction in average age of initiation.
- Alcohol use is considered a risk factor for high risk sexual behaviour leading to sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS.
- Alcohol has a marked effect on the central nervous system.

- *According to current concepts, alcoholism is considered a disease and alcohol a "disease agent" which causes acute and chronic intoxication, cirrhosis of liver, toxic psychosis, gastritis, pancreatitis, cardiomyopathy and peripheral neuropathy.*
- *Also, evidence is mounting that it is related to cancer of mouth, pharynx, larynx and esophagus.*

Host Factors :


Studies report motives for drug dependence with descriptive words such as

- *Pleasure*
- *Desire to experiment*
- *Sense of adventure*
- *Wish for self-knowledge, and*
- *Desire to escape*

- Increasingly, people are unwilling to accept even minor discomforts and are looking to drugs for solutions.
- The average age of drug users has decreased considerably in recent years.
- Multiple drug use has also become common. It may be more common where drug abuse is a relatively recent occurrence.
- Concern over drug-use by teenagers has also increased.

Symptoms of Drug Addiction

1. Loss of interest in sports and daily routine
2. Loss of appetite and body weight
3. Reddening and puffiness of eyes, unclear vision
4. Slurring of speech
5. Fresh, numerous injection marks on body and blood stains on clothes
6. Nausea , vomiting and body pain

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7. Drowsiness or sleeplessness, lethargy and passivity
 8. Acute anxiety, depression, profuse sweating
 9. Changing mood, temper, tantrums
 10. Depersonalization and emotional detachment
 11. Impaired memory and concentration
 12. Presence of needles, syringes and strange packets at home

Environmental Factors

Among the environmental factors attributed to drug dependence are

- Unemployment
- Living away from home
- Broken families
- Easy exposure to drugs
- Certain occupations
- High crime rate.

Prevention:

Legal Approach

- ✓ Legislation may be directed at controlling the
 - Manufacture
 - Distribution
 - Prescription
 - Price
 - Time of sale
 - Consumption of a substance
- ✓ Legal control on the distribution of drugs is an important approach in the prevention of drug abuse.

- ✓ Legislation restricting or prohibiting advertisements that directly or indirectly promote the use of tobacco and alcohol has been increasingly common in recent years.
- ✓ Some of the suggested antismoking measures include:
 - Prohibition of sale of those products to minors.
 - Prohibition of smoking in schools and other places frequented by young people.
 - Prohibition of smoking in public.
 - Mandatory health education.
 - Mandatory health warning on cigarette packets.

Educational Approach

- ✓ Common approaches have included educational programmes for school children and public information campaigns on electronic media.
- ✓ The message should be clear and unambiguous to the intended audience, and come from credible source of information.
- ✓ To be effective, such approaches should be regarded as a part of integrated plan of action involving other strategies.

Community Approach

- A popular approach to the prevention of drug abuse is provision of alternative activities which may help to prevent drug abuse .
- Eg. : “Teen centers” which provide for additional activities attractive to the adolescents such as:
 - establishment of groups interested in athletics, sports, music, public policy, religion, artistic activities of various kinds, and
 - Improvement of the environment through the prevention of pollution.

Treatment:

- Treatment cannot take place unless the individual attends for it.
- Though drug addiction may be considered as a social problem, the first step in its management is medical care, which includes:
 - I. Identification of drug addicts and their motivation for detoxification.
 - II. Detoxification
 - III. Post detoxification counselling and follow- ups
 - IV. Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation:

The rehabilitation of former drug user , regardless of age is in most cases a long and difficult process. Facilities for vocational training and sometimes the provision of sheltered work opportunities are useful in rehabilitation and helps to prevent relapse.

Generally speaking, facilities for the registration , diagnosis , treatment, after-care, etc. of drug dependant individuals and groups should be regarded as indispensable integrated parts of the health and social services structure of any community in which drug-dependence exists.

References

- Park's Textbook of Preventive and Social Medicine
- Wikipedia

Thank You