

DRUG ABUSE: ITS IMPACT ON STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract

One of the essential elements of primary healthcare is the provision of essential drugs. Drugs occupy a unique position in healthcare. They make health care credible because they can cure diseases, relieve symptoms, and alleviate suffering. The psychological satisfaction produced by drugs creates a favourable environment on which preventive educational elements of health care can be built. However, drug abuse poses a major threat to our national security and existence. Therefore, the flow of drugs into the country should be significantly controlled. This paper examines drug abuse in all its concept, factors that contribute to drug abuse, its managements and implications on students in tertiary institutions.

Introduction

Opadiji (2005) defines a drug as any chemical substance that influences or modifies the action of the body's own chemistry, affecting either the mind or the body. In the medical circle, drug abuse refers to the use of any drug in a manner that deviates from the approved medical or social patterns.

Science Teachers Association of Nigeria (1982), sees a drug as a chemical substance which affects the action of the body.

The term drug abuse refers to the use of drugs for purposes other than their legitimate medical uses. Contextually speaking, drug abuse refers to the use of hard drugs such as amphetamine, cocaine, cannabis, narcotics, heroin, etc and their harmful social and medical manifestations.

A large number of people use the drugs to influence their normal behaviour and to produce altered state of feeling for recreational, ceremonial, sporting and other purposes. This pattern of use often deviates from the legitimate medical application of the drug involved.

The practice leads to more intense use in terms of frequency or amount that results in dependence or compulsive use. The concept of drug abuse is as old as the history of humanity. Different societies have various types of drugs or medicinal substances they abuse for different reasons.

Factors that Contribute to Drug Abuse

Many psychologists, psychoanalysts, scientists, amongst others, have offered several theories in trying to assess the reason for indulgence into drug abuse. According to Adenikan (1990),^{91,92} drugs can be abused for various reasons such as:

- 1) Loss of beloved one.
- 2) Euphoria (temporary excitement)
- 3) Enhancement of sexual power.
- 4) State of sleeplessness to perform some tasks for example, students take amphetamine to read far into the night, long distance drivers take ephedrine and amphetamine to have energy and remain awake.
- 5) Psychiatric disorders such as anxiety depression, sleeplessness, etc.
- 6) Changes in physical and socio-economic status.
- 7) Influence of peer groups and friends.
- 8) Criminals and cultists take drugs to enhance their criminal activities.
- 9) To boost one's ego.
- 10) To abort an unwanted pregnancy.
- 11) Trying to escape feeling of loneliness or even subtle symptoms like shyness and feel like part of the crowd can also contribute to or influence the pattern of drug use by individuals. Such people discover that certain drugs give them relief and since the apparent beneficial effects are usually transient, they end up using the drugs repeatedly, thereby resulting in abuse.

Availability of legal substances such as alcohol and tobacco also provide greater opportunities for use and their social acceptance explains why for most people, they will be the first psychoactive substances to be tried:

Furthermore, practices such as drinking competitions in some schools, open display and advertisement of alcoholic beverages and tobacco also encourage drug abuse.

Drug abuse and addiction are also associated with some underlying social and individual factors such as frustration, ineffective families, lack of personal goals and resources amongst others.

Drugs of Abuse

Most of the drugs commonly used to modify behaviours, moods and emotions can be placed in the following classes:-

1. ***Psychostimulants***

These are drugs used to relieve mild depressions, keep patients awake from sleeping, curb the appetite and weight reduction. Other effects of these drugs are:- excitation, alertness, capability of prolonged engagement in any physical activity etc. Examples include cocaine, caffeine, nicotine, amphetamines or barbiturates.

2. ***Narcotics, Analgesics/Depressants***

These are used medically for the relief of pain. They produce decreased alertness and can lead to loss of consciousness. Among these groups of drugs are opium, valium, heroine, lexotan, codeine and nitrazepan.

J. ***Hallucinogens (Psychedelic Drugs)***

The continuous use of these drugs has been proclaimed quick trips to bliss or shortcuts to discovering inner self. Examples include Lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), Cannabis Sativa also known as Marijuana or Indian hemp, etc.

4 ***Inhalants***

Drugs within these categories are frequently used as nasal decongestants. The resultant effects of these drugs include decreased anxiety, pulse rate, suppressed appetite and weight loss. Examples are ephedrine, nitrous oxide, ethyl ether, and volatile solvents.

5 ***Sedatives***

These are used medically to treat epilepsy, and insomnia (prolonged inability to sleep) and to quieten the mental patients and make them more susceptible to psychotherapy (treatment of mental illness in a sleep-like state). Examples of drugs include valium, lexotan, phenobarbitone, alcohol, benzodiazepines, etc.

Consequences of Drug Abuse

Obodozie (2004),⁴⁷ listed the following as the consequences of drug abuse:-

1. It leads to mental disorder (madness).
2. It can lead to premature death.
3. It leads to social problems like loss of job, friends and colleagues.
4. It leads to loss of control.
5. It leads to criminal behaviours and activities.
6. It leads to separation and divorce.
7. It leads to child abuse and behavioural disorders.
8. It leads to fatal accidents caused by drunken and intoxicated drivers.
9. It leads to diseases such as hepatitis, endocarditis, liver cirrhosis, lung cancer etc
10. Drug abusers indulge indiscriminate sexual activities.
- U. It leads to miscarriages.
12. It leads to financial hardships.
13. It makes one to become violent and aggressive.

Impact of Drug Abuse on Students in Tertiary Institution

1. Students who abuse drugs are often rusticated from schools.
2. Female students who abuse drugs in order to abort unwanted pregnancies often die as a result
3. A lot of students in our institution of higher learning have turned to criminals because of their involvement in drug abuse.

4. Some have joined secret cults as a result of drug abuse
5. Some students have gone mad as a result of drug abuse.
6. Many students have ended up as school drop-outs because of drug abuse.
7. Many young female students are forced into prostitution to support their habit of drug abuse.
8. Many male students have harassed their female counterparts sexually and sometimes ended up raping them.
9. Some students have lost their good friends because of their involvement in drug abuse and addition.
10. Many students spend all the money they have just to stay on drugs and this has caused untold hardship to them.
11. Every year, many students are treated for drug-related injuries and disorders.
12. Many students are violent and hostile to their fellow students because of the influence of drug abuse.
13. Some students have been arrested and jailed for drug abuse and other drug-related offences.

Drug Abuse Management

1. The most effective treatment programmes are comprehensive and multi-dimensional and can be delivered in most healthcare delivery settings
2. An understanding of the pharmacology of the drug or combination of the drugs ingested is essential for rational and effective treatment of overdose or for detoxication of a person who is experiencing withdrawal symptoms.
3. Guidance and counselling should be provided to drug users.
4. Former drug addicts should be re-trained in new behaviours and attitudes towards a more-productive life.

In addition to pharmacological, scientific and behavioural counseling, patients may need-parental instructions, vocational rehabilitation, social services amongst others.

Conclusion

There are many hard drug addicts in the country today. A great number of them abuse alcohol, Indian hemp and cocaine. Teeming number of them suffer from ill-effects of over medication from their own hands.

It is known that narcotics addiction in Nigeria dates back to the mid - 1940 when the returning ex-servicemen from the World War II brought back with them the hemp-smoking habit, that is cannabis saliva which today is the most widely abused hard drug in Nigeria especially by students. Various stimulants, sedatives and tranquilizers have also been abused, almost as soon as they were introduced into medical practice. Today, hard drug abuse is on the increase. This has led to increasing crime waves, social disturbances among our youths and students, heavy loss in road accidents, brain damage and criminal truancy.

The need for enlightenment campaign, orientation, up to date appraisal, proper management and control, rehabilitation etc cannot be over emphasized.

Furthermore, in the present dispensation, the issue of Drug Abuse is a global tragedy that needs timely intervention, co-operation and support in order to eradicate the menace.

Health professionals need to rise up to their responsibility by getting involved in designing society responses to the emerging problems. Control measures are more likely to be effective when they are based on the evidence of accumulated professional experience.

The trafficking in and abuse of dangerous drugs must be nipped in the bud by the government and the various drug law enforcement agencies if our nation is to avoid major social and economic dislocations arising from this global tragedy.

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