

# HEALTH COUNSELLING: A PANACEA TO RELIEVING DRUG ABUSERS

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## **Abstract**

Drug abuse which is the use of illicit drugs or the abuse of prescription or over-the-counter drugs for purposes other than those for which they are intended has rendered many youths useless and even led to the death of many. This paper therefore identified health counseling as a panacea to relieving drug abuses.

## **Introduction**

Health counseling is an emerging area of counseling that is gaining attention. Health counseling is one of the health guidance services which is the relationship between a client and counselor in which the central theme is the issue of client's health concerns or challenges, discussion of the health issues bordering a client and assisting the client to draw up plans and take actions to overcome, or cope with a health problem, (Ugwuegbulam, 2005).

Ibeagha (2007) stated that health counseling exist to help the needy in society. It is a method of interpreting to the client and parents, the findings or results of appraisal and encouraging or assisting them to take appropriate action in order to realize their potentials. Health counseling is also seen as a means of assuring a child of a choice not force and not actually advice. It is also a part of treatment given to the sick or to the troubled person for promoting his life and for preventive purposes.

According to Ugwuegbulam (2005) the objective of health counseling could be said to include the following.

- a. To enhance a positive regard for self acceptance of self and others.
- b. To motivate clients to keep self in an optional state mind.
- c. Enhance clients understanding of their health.
- d. Help clients in planning their health programmes in a way that it will be consistent with what they or want to do after school.
- e. Help clients implement good health practices.
- f. To promote conference on health.
- g. To implement health referral for clients to appropriate health agencies.

## **Need and Purpose of Health Counseling**

Ibeagha (2007) highlighted the following as the need and purpose for health counseling.

- Help to give the clients information about their health status as revealed by health appraisal.
- It is a means of securing diagnostic advice.

- It also helps to produce adapted programme for the exceptional client based on their differences in terms of their problems.
- It is a process of helping the client develops full appreciation of the valuable asset he has in good health.
- It also help them to offset the pressure of consumerism, helps us become better consumers of health.
- To help clients responsibility for their own health in keeping with the state of their maturity.

Students and teachers, like most people do take drugs. They take drugs for different reasons; some use drugs as prescribed, other abuse its use. In Nigeria drug use has been part of our socio- health inheritance. In Onuzolike (2002) defined drug as a chemical substance capable of altering the physical and psychological functions of the body. Drug is any chemical that has an effect upon the body and mind of an individual. A drug when modifies one or more functions of the taker (Onyemerekeya, 2005). Adolescents take drug and at times abuse it.

Dental dictionary (2004) defines drug abuse as an excessive improper use of drugs especially through self, significantly because of the enactment of the Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970 which replaces the Harrison Narcotic Act.

According to Onuzolike (2002) drug are abused when taken excessively, improperly or persistently without doctor's prescription. Drugs are often recognized as hard or soft, legal or illegal, uppers or downers or addictive and non- addictive. Drug abuse is seen as rising when the drug (any substance) is being used by some person and this use is judged to be wrong use (illegal or immoral) and is harmful to the user or society or both, (Nwamuo, 2001).

However drugs constantly abused can be categorized based upon the effect they produce. These include the following as recorded by counseling directory(2009).

- i. Stimulants- they are drugs that increase the acuity of the central nervous system and increase brain activity. They subdue tiredness.
- ii. Depressant-they are drugs that reduce the activity of the central nervous system and slow down brain activity thereby including lethargy. Example includes solvent, alcohol, barbiturates, heroin and tranquilizers
- iii. Narcotics – they are depressant with major effect on the nervous system and respiratory system. They are used extensively as pain relieving drugs in the past. Example includes opium, morphine, and codeine. They produce the feeling of drowsiness, euphoria and contentment
- iv. Hallucinogens- they alter perception of reality changing the way users experience the world through their senses. Examples are LSD, cannabis, ketamine , peyote, mescaline etc. often users will see and hear things that is not real. They can also trigger psychotic reaction, including paranoia

### **Causes of Drug Abuse**

According to counseling directory (2009) many reasons are attributed to why individuals abuse drugs and these will vary from person to person. However, some common reasons are likely to be:

- Escapism
- The belief that drugs can solve problems
- Peer pressure
- Need to experiment
- Enjoyment of the effect
- Easy access to socially acceptable drugs such as alcohol and tobacco.

Irambiya (2009) opined that the cause of drug abuse could be psychological or family system and Communal psychological factors include frustration, Imitation, personality tracts, desires to improve social Relation, family system and community factors such as existence of marital problems, stress in the family etc peer influence and other factors such as academic difficulties, enhancing performance in sport, illiteracy.

### **Physical Warning Sign of Drug Abuse**

Leshner (2003) outlines the following signs such as

- Bloodshot eyes or pupils that is large or small than usual
- changes in appetite or sleep patterns
- sudden weight loss or weight gain
- unusual smells of breath, body or clothing
- deterioration of physical appearance and personal grooming habit
- tremors, slurred speech or impaired co-ordination

### **Behavioral Warning Sign**

- Drop in attendance and performance at work or school
- engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviors
- Unexplained need for money or financial problems
- Sudden change in friends, favorite hangouts and hobbies
- Frequently getting into trouble (fight, accident, illegal activities. {Deykin, Levy and well, 2007}).

### **Psychological Warning Signs**

Smith and Saisan (2010) highlighted the following signs thus:

- Unexplained change in personality or attitude
- Sudden mood swings, irritability or angry outburst
- Lack of motivation, appears lethargic
- Appears fearful, anxious or paranoid
- Periods of unusual hyperactivity, agitation or giddiness.

### **Steps Adopted by Health Counselors in Combating Drug Abuse**

Health counseling can be immeasurably beneficial in helping a client understand why they drink or use drugs and alcohol, how alcohol and drugs are destroying their lives and why they are alcoholic or addict. It is often the best ways to start helping a client to address the reasons that they take drugs or alcohol (Ugwuegbulam 2002).

Counseling against drug abuse in Nigeria is measure and means to combat drug trafficking and drug abuse in Nigeria. These involve the use of different methods against illicit traffick in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances. Khantzian, Halliday and McAulife (2000) suggested that the following procedure should be adopted during counseling of drug abusers:

- Acknowledgement that there is problem
- Foster environment where the client gains self- esteem through gradual self – efficacy and internal locus of control in choosing to use the social and therapeutic support systems provide through the treatment centre.
- The need for referral in advanced cases.
- Structured and targeted media intervention.
- Organization of seminars and workshops whereby issues affecting client well being and impaired proper function is known and providing adequate information.

According to US National institute on Drug Abuse (2000) the following steps are Adopted in Counseling drug Abusers:

- Counselors ought to counsel individuals with related problems of substance.
- Clients are to be counseled and empowered with substance abuse problems and treat the substance abuse problem.
- Establish the same open, collaborative therapeutic relationship in counseling individuals with substance abuse problems.
- Focus counseling relationship on addressing the client's present problems directly and identifying client need for change.
- The counselor must be able to articulate and implement counseling intervention strategies perceived as appropriate by the client and the counselor.
- They must know community resources and procedures for referral to be able to insure access to effective and appropriate support services for clients.

### **Counseling Procedures**

Nwamuo [2005] asserted that giving assistance to drug abusers is not easy thing. It is not a thing of force but cooperation and collaboration. In order to do this, the counselor has to get the willing consent or approval of the drug abusers that he needs assistance to stop or reduce drug abusing behaviour. One of

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the way to get the clients interest and co-operation to reduce abuse on client-physically, socially, emotionally, educationally etc and society.

- A. **Using Aversive Therapies** – this is progressive relaxation and sensitization habit. The therapies include electric shock and verbal aversion, the electric shock is administered by the client to the forearm, taking effects and advised to think of their effects whenever they want to take drugs. When this is done: the potency of the techniques is likely to field in a desired result.
  
- B. **Reassuring Environment Contingencies** – this strategy is derived from the stable of the operant conditioning technique and focuses on the consequences of behaviour, it is assumed that drug abusers receive more reinforcement, be it positive or negative, when taking drugs than when they are off the drug. The objective of rearranging environment inferences is to provide maximum intoxicated and punishment or withdrawal of reinforcement of taking drugs in school situation, the taken economy system and behavioral contingency contracting are adapted to be used when working on drug addicts. A counselor should employ them following the processes.
  
- C. **Modify Abusive and Dependent Behaviors** – one of the issues facing drug addicts is whether they rise above the temptation of taking drugs when faced with such a challenge. In reaction to this, the behaviorists have advanced some techniques that could be used to modify drug addiction in abusers. The technique includes self control methods and skill training. Ekennia (1999) had demonstrated the efficiency of self control methods in cigarette smoking cessation. Self control method would be discussed on:
  - Removing those things he/she uses when he/she wants to take those addicted drugs such as removing ash trays, beer mugs etc.
  - Socializing with non – drug addicts.
  - Avoiding situation and places linked to substance taking and abuse.
  - Seeking assistance from a counselor when attempting to control his or her addictive behaviour.
  - Not going to where the substance that is abused is sold.
  - Training in assertiveness so that the drug abuser can develop a strong will to say “NO” to taking drugs and actually keeping to it (Ugwuegbulam, 2005).
  
- D. **Personalized Processes** – Ibeagha (2007) opined that aims to make the client take control of his action, situation he does not have to blame

somebody else but himself. It is a process of letting the person feels that he is a whole being capable of solving his problem.

- E. **Assumption of Responsibility** – the counselor helps the client to take responsibility for certain things such as drug addict given certain drugs to keep.
- F. **Role playing** – it helps to enhance self awareness of the individual. It makes for self discovery and makes one relieve anxiety and develops a feeling of self sufficient and self confidence it can be spontaneous or structured.
- G. **Frustration Technique** – the counselor makes client to come in contact with this problem, relaxing the mind to avoid any emotional problem and can live with it by self assessment, self determination evaluation, and careful analysis of your life.

### **Conclusion**

Drug abuse has dealt devastating blow on people of all age brackets worldwide. It has also infiltrated all the strata of the society in both the developed and developing countries of the world. However, meticulously analyzed survey constitutes a menace and threat to the entire society. Health counseling leaves the client / drug abuser with the choices of having good health or death as it exposes them to the effects of drug abuse on individual health. Health counseling saves life and whoever you are, however hopeless you believe yourself to be , the right drug rehabilitation program really can help you get sober. The catch is that the client must be willing to seek help. The health counselor adopts all necessary procedures in relieving the drug abuser.

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