



The substance use, abuse & misuse and in India

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Abstract

Substance use patterns are notorious for their ability to change over time. Both licit and illicit substance use cause serious public health problems and evidence for the same is now available in our country. National level prevalence has been calculated for many substances of abuse, but regional variations are quite evident. Rapid assessment surveys have facilitated the understanding of changing patterns of use. Substance use among women and children are increasing causes of concern. Preliminary neurobiological research has focused on identifying individuals at high risk for alcohol dependence. Clinical research in the area has focused primarily on alcohol and substance related comorbidity. There is disappointingly little research on pharmacological and psychosocial interventions. Course and outcome studies emphasize the need for better follow-up in this group. While lack of a comprehensive policy has been repeatedly highlighted and various suggestions made to address the range of problems caused by substance use, much remains to be done on the ground to prevent and address these problems.

The epidemic of substance abuse in young generation has assumed alarming dimensions in India. Changing cultural values, increasing economic stress and dwindling supportive bonds are leading to initiation into substance use. Cannabis, heroin, and Indian-produced pharmaceutical drugs are the most frequently abused drugs in India. Drug use, misuse or abuse is also primarily due to the nature of the drug abused, the personality of the individual and the addict's immediate environment. The processes of industrialization, urbanization and migration have led to loosening of the traditional methods of social control rendering an individual vulnerable to the stresses and strains of modern life.

Keywords: alcohol, drugs, India, substance use

Introduction

Substance abuse, or drug abuse, is a patterned use of a drug in which the user consumes the substance in amounts or with methods which are harmful to themselves or others, and is a form of substance-related disorder. Drug abuse' is no longer a current medical diagnosis in either of the most used diagnostic tools in the world, the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), and the World Health Organization's International Statistical Classification of Diseases and ICRIS Medical organization Related Health Problems (ICD)

Substance abuse has been adopted by the DSM as a blanket term to include 10 separate classes of drugs, including alcohol; caffeine; cannabis; hallucinogens; inhalants; opioids; sedatives, hypnotics, and anxiolytics; stimulants; tobacco; and other substances. The ICD uses the term *Harmful use* to cover physical or psychological harm to the user from use.

Physical dependence, abuse of, and withdrawal from drugs and other miscellaneous substances is outlined in the DSM. When an individual persists in use of alcohol or other drugs despite problems related to use of the substance, substance dependence may be diagnosed. Compulsive and repetitive use may result in tolerance to the effect of the drug and withdrawal symptoms when use is reduced or stopped.

However, other definitions differ; they may entail psychological or physical *dependence*, and may focus on

treatment and prevention in terms of the social consequences of substance uses.

Drug misuse is a term used commonly when prescription medication with sedative, anxiolytic, analgesic, or stimulant properties are used for mood alteration or intoxication ignoring the fact that overdose of such medicines can sometimes have serious adverse effects. It sometimes involves drug diversion from the individual for whom it was prescribed.

Prescription misuse has been defined differently and rather inconsistently based on status of drug prescription, the uses without a prescription, intentional use to achieve intoxicating effects, route of administration, co-ingestion with alcohol, and the presence or absence of dependence symptoms. Chronic use of certain substances leads to a change in the central nervous system known as a 'tolerance' to the medicine such that more of the substance is needed in order to produce desired effects. With some substances, stopping or reducing use can cause withdrawal symptoms to occur^[14], but this is highly dependent on the specific substance in question.

Widely differing definitions of drug abuse are used in public health, medical and criminal justice contexts. In some cases criminal or anti-social behavior occurs when the person is under the influence of a drug, and long term personality changes in individuals may occur as well. In addition to possible physical, social, and psychological harm, use of

some drugs may also lead to criminal penalties, although these vary widely depending on the local jurisdiction. Drugs most often associated with this term.

clude: alcohol, cannabis, barbiturates, benzodiazepines, cocaine, methaqualone, opioids and some substituted amphetamines. The exact cause of substance abuse is not clear, with theories including one of two: either a genetic disposition which is learned from others, or a habit which if addiction develops, it manifests itself as a chronic debilitating disease

Discussion

Drug abuse is the habit of regular intake of illegal drugs characterized by mis-use of drugs. There is a thin-line of difference between Drug abuse and addiction. In case of drug abuse, the person may or may not be addicted to these harmful drugs. However, in case of drug addiction, the person is severely addicted to these drugs. Thus, drug abuse may often lead to drug addiction. Drug abuse and addiction is one of the great evils of our time. It has become a serious problem in India. Young and old alike everywhere are addicted to drugs. It has resulted in increased crime, tension, disease, horror and lack of peace and security. The cities have attracted large number of youth who come in search of employment. Such people live a lonely and isolated life and become anti-social. They fall into evil company and get addicted. The children who are deprived of the loving care and affection, and do not get right type of education are prone to be addicted to drugs. In the beginning it comes as an escape from the monotony or drudgery of routine life, as an object of thrill, stimulation or excitement. Gradually the addicts depend more and more upon drugs. They develop a kind of madness. They add to the number of anti-social elements who disrupt peaceful social life. Drugs are often smuggled from one country to another and sold through the agents and sub-agents who work secretly. In India drug abuse has become wide-spread and a cause of concern for the people and the government. The major causes of drug abuse and addiction are given below:

- a) It is to be noted that despair very often drives many to drug addiction. Students who remain far away from parents and guardians and live in hostels and messes become victims of addition.
- b) Their keeping contact with bad company pushes them to be addicts. There is no proper direction, no goal or objective before young men and women to move forward and reach.
- c) Our education is such that it does not prepare students to fit into life. Coming out of the schools and colleges, they find that they have no future, no prospects in life.

Addictive drug abuse is a growing problem in all countries among children, adolescents, adults and elders. In developing countries, particularly India, over the counter sales of these drugs are the main cause of this problem. In India, cough syrups, antipsychiatric drugs, antihistamines and narcotic analgesics are the most commonly abused drugs. These drugs are used alone or with alcoholic beverages. Thus awareness and strict law enforcement to regulate over the counter sales of these drugs are important in preventing drug abuse

The epidemic of substance abuse in young generation has assumed alarming dimensions in India. Changing cultural values, increasing economic stress and dwindling supportive

bonds are leading to initiation into substance use. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) substance abuse is persistent or sporadic drug use inconsistent with or unrelated to acceptable medical practice. The picture is grim if the world statistics on the drugs scenario is taken into account. With a turnover of around \$500 billions, it is the third largest business in the world, next to petroleum and arms trade. About 190 million people all over the world consume one drug or the other Drug addiction causes immense human distress and the illegal production and distribution of drugs have spawned crime and violence worldwide.

June 26 is celebrated as International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking every year. It is an exercise undertaken by the world community to sensitize the people in general and the youth in particular, to the menace of drugs. Today, there is no part of the world that is free from the curse of drug trafficking and drug addiction. Millions of drug addicts, all over the world, are leading miserable lives, between life and death. India too is caught in this vicious circle of drug abuse, and the numbers of drug addicts are increasing day by day. According to a UN report, One million heroin addicts are registered in India, and unofficially there are as many as five million. What started off as casual use among a minuscule population of high-income group youth in the metro has permeated to all sections of society. Inhalation of heroin alone has given way to intravenous drug use, that too in combination with other sedatives and painkillers. This has increased the intensity of the effect, hastened the process of addiction and complicated the process of recovery.

Cannabis, heroin, and Indian-produced pharmaceutical drugs are the most frequently abused drugs in India. Cannabis products, often called charas, bhang, or ganja, are abused throughout the country because it has attained some amount of religious sanctity because of its association with some Hindu deities

The International Narcotics Control Board in its 2002 report released in Vienna pointed out that in India persons addicted to opiates are shifting their drug of choice from opium to heroin. The pharmaceutical products containing narcotic drugs are also increasingly being abused. The intravenous injections of analgesics like dextropropoxphene etc are also reported from many states, as it is easily available at 1/10th the cost of heroin. The codeine-based cough syrups continue to be diverted from the domestic market for abuse. Drug abuse is a complex phenomenon, which has various social, cultural, biological, geographical, historical and economic aspects. The disintegration of the old joint family system, absence of parental love and care in modern families where both parents are working, decline of old religious and moral values etc lead to a rise in the number of drug addicts who take drugs to escape hard realities of life.

Drug use, misuse or abuse is also primarily due to the nature of the drug abused, the personality of the individual and the addict's immediate environment. The processes of industrialization, urbanization and migration have led to loosening of the traditional methods of social control rendering an individual vulnerable to the stresses and strains of modern life. The introduction of synthetic drugs and intravenous drug use leading to HIV/AIDS has added a new dimension to the problem, especially in the Northeast states of the country. Drug abuse has led to a detrimental impact on the society. It has led to increase in the crime rate. Addicts

resort to crime to pay for their drugs. Drugs remove inhibition and impair judgment egging one on to commit offences. Incidences of teasing, group clashes, assault and impulsive murders increase with drug abuse.

Apart from affecting the financial stability, addiction increases conflicts and causes untold emotional pain for every member of the family. With most drug users being in the productive age group of 18-35 years, the loss in terms of human potential is incalculable. The damage to the physical, psychological, moral and intellectual growth of the youth is very high. Adolescent drug abuse is one of the major areas of concern in adolescent and young people's behavior. It is estimated that, in India, by the time most boys reach the ninth grade, about 50 percent of them have tried at least one of the substance of abuse nature ^[4]. In last three decades, many epidemiological surveys have been carried out in India to assess the prevalence of substance abuse.

In Uttar Pradesh, Dube and Handa reported that 22.8 per 1000 were dependent on alcohol and drugs while from Lucknow gave a figure of 18.55 per 1000. The Important finding of these studies is that alcohol was the commonest substance used (60-98%) followed by cannabis use (4-20%). Epidemiological surveys] also revealed that 20-40% of subjects above 15 years are current users of alcohol and 10% of them are regular or excessive users. In a rural population of Uttar Pradesh alcohol was found to be the commonest substance abused (82.5%) followed by cannabis (16.1%). Varma *et al.* ^[9] found that rates of current use of alcohol in Punjab were 45.9% in Jalandhar and 27.7% in Chandigarh whereas it was 28.1% in rural areas of Punjab. Shukla reported that 38.3% of the rural population in Uttar Pradesh was habitual substance users. In a study conducted in rural community in Bihar prevalence of alcohol/drug use was found to be 28.8% of the study population. Increase in incidences of HIV, hepatitis B and C and tuberculosis due to addiction adds the reservoir of infection in the community burdening the health care system further. Women in India face greater problems from drug abuse. The consequences include domestic violence and infection with HIV, as well as the financial burden. India has braced itself to face the menace of drug trafficking both at the national and international levels. Several measures involving innovative changes in enforcement, legal and judicial systems have been brought into effect.

Drug abuse has led to a detrimental impact on the society. It has led to increase in the crime rate. Addicts resort to crime to pay for their drugs. Drugs remove inhibition and impair judgment egging one on to commit offences. Incidence of eve-teasing, group clashes, assault and impulsive murders increase with drug abuse. Apart from affecting the financial stability, addiction increases conflicts and causes untold emotional pain for every member of the family. With most drug users being in the productive age group of 18-35 years, the loss in terms of human potential is incalculable. The damage to the physical, psychological, moral and intellectual growth of the youth is very high. Adolescent drug abuse is one of the major areas of concern in adolescent and young people's behavior. It is estimated that, in India, by the time most boys reach the ninth grade, about 50 percent of them have tried at least one of the gateway drugs.

However, there is a wide regional variation across states in term of the incidence of the substance abuse. For example, a

larger proportion of teens in West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh use gateway drugs (about 60 percent in both the states) than Uttar Pradesh or Haryana (around 35 percent). Increase in incidences of HIV, hepatitis B and C and tuberculosis due to addiction adds the reservoir of infection in the community burdening the health care system further. Women in India face greater problems from drug abuse. The consequences include domestic violence and infection with HIV, as well as the financial burden. Eighty seven per cent of addicts being treated in a de-addiction center run by the Delhi police acknowledged being violent with family members. Most of the domestic violence is directed against women and occurs in the context of demands for money to buy drugs. At the national level, drug abuse is intrinsically linked with racketeering, conspiracy, corruption, illegal money transfers, terrorism and violence threatening the very stability of governments.

The introduction of death penalty for drug-related offences has been a major deterrent. 6 The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, were enacted with stringent provisions to curb this menace. The Act envisages a minimum term of 10 years imprisonment extendable to 20 years and fine of Rs. 1 lakh extendable up to Rs. 2 lakhs for the offenders. Comprehensive strategy involving specific programmes to bring about an overall reduction in use of drugs has been evolved by the various government agencies and NGOs and is further supplemented by measures like education, counseling, treatment and rehabilitation programmes. Substance abuse can be addressed at the individual level, at the local level (society, national, etc.) and at the cross-national level. At the individual level, there has to be a synthesis of biological understanding with the exploration of background socio-cultural factors. At the national and cross-national level, there has to be a concerted effort of all the countries in managing the issue of substance abuse, taking into account the local socio-cultural and India has braced itself to face the menace of drug trafficking both at the national and international levels. Several measures involving innovative changes in enforcement, legal and judicial systems have been brought into effect. The introduction of death penalty for drug-related offences has been a major deterrent. The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985, were enacted with stringent provisions to curb this menace. The Act envisages a minimum term of 10 years imprisonment extendable to 20 years and fine of Rs. 1 lakh extendable up to Rs. 2 lakhs for the offenders.

The Act has been further amended by making provisions for the forfeiture of properties derived from illicit drugs trafficking. Comprehensive strategy involving specific programmes to bring about an overall reduction in use of drugs has been evolved by the various government agencies and NGOs and is further supplemented by measures like education, counseling. India has bilateral agreements on drug trafficking with 13 countries, including Pakistan and Burma. Prior to 1999, extradition between India and the United States occurred under the auspices of a 1931 treaty signed by the United States and the United Kingdom, which was made applicable to India in 1942. However, a new extradition treaty between India and the United States entered into force in July 1999. A Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty was signed by India and the United States in October 2001. India also is signatory to the following treaties and conventions: 1961

U.N. Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1971 U.N. Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1988 U.N. Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 2000 Transnational Crime Convention political scenarios.

Conclusion

Drug abuse or substance abuse is a complex phenomenon, which has various social, cultural, biological, geographical, historical and economic aspects. The disintegration of the old joint family system, absence of parental love and care in modern families where both parents are working, decline of old religious and moral values etc lead to a rise in the number of drug addicts who take drugs to escape hard realities of life. Drug use, misuse or abuse is also primarily due to the nature of the drug abused, the personality of the individual and the addict's immediate environment. The processes of industrialization, urbanization and migration have led to loosening of the traditional methods of social control rendering an individual vulnerable to the stresses and strains of modern life. The fast changing social milieu, among other factors, is mainly contributing to the proliferation of drug abuse, both of traditional and of new psychoactive substances. The introduction of synthetic drugs and intravenous drug use leading to HIV/AIDS has added a new dimension to the problem, especially in the Northeast states of the country.

Substance use is associated with significant mortality and morbidity. Substance use among women and children is increasingly becoming the focus of attention and merits further research. Pharmaceutical drug abuse and inhalant use are serious concerns. For illicit drug use, rapid assessment surveys have provided insights into patterns and required responses. Drug related emergencies have not been adequately studied in the Indian context.

Biological research has focused on two broad areas, neurobiology of vulnerability and a few studies on molecular genetics. There is a great need for translation research based on the wider body of basic and animal research in the area.

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