

Drug Abuse: Factors, Types and Prevention Measures

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Abstract

Reviews the literature and states that appropriate research describing initial use of illicit drugs suggests that disruption of normal child-parent relationships, lack of involvement in organized groups, and few effective peer relationships may have been predisposing factors in some individuals initiating use of illicit drugs. Research also suggests that socialization to nontraditional norms, parental modeling of licit and illicit drug use, involvement with drug-using peers, and positive experiences with drugs may have been important factors in initial use for other individuals. It is concluded that both theory and research need a clear distinction between the several paths leading to initial drug abuse, particularly since separate statistical analyses may be necessary for people in each path.

Keywords: Substance abuse, Drug dependence, Addiction, Legal Drugs, Illegal Drugs

Introduction

The goal of reducing drug abuse has shaped some of the world government's most uncompromising policies. Preventing the onset of cigarette smoking is a major public health goal [1]. Tobacco use is difficult for individuals to control and the usual pattern of life-long, dependent smoking is associated with serious health consequences. Although moderate use of alcohol and marijuana is widespread, and many people believe that judicious use of these substances may create no serious social or medical risk [2], there is general agreement that frequent use of these substances among young adolescents should be prevented. Thus schools and health agencies have sought effective programs to deter or delay smoking, alcohol, and drug use among junior-high school students. Narrow strategies of prevention have tended to yield disappointing or paradoxical results," [3] prompting researchers to study the problem in search of more effective preventive measures. Social pressure, particularly peer pressure, appears to be an important factor favoring the onset of early adolescent smoking [4], and is probably also involved in the onset of alcohol and drug abuse [5]. These findings suggest that training

students to resist specific social pressures toward tobacco, alcohol, and drug use may reduce the frequency of those behaviors. To gather data on that hypothesis, our research team has been conducting a longitudinal study of the onset of smoking, alcohol, and marijuana use among students in two roughly-matched, middle-class junior-high-schools in California. The background and early results of our investigation are published elsewhere [6].

Addiction affects family functioning. It changes how families relate and the roles that each member plays. The addiction becomes the family's priority [7, 8]. Gruber and Taylor [9] present a cogent argument that addiction must be seen from a family perspective to be properly understood. Much of the research and clinical literature has been focused on adults who have substance abuse or dependency disorders [10–12]. Insights on family functioning with an addict can be seen through personal stories that tell the experience from one family's or one teenager's perspective [13–16]. Velleman [17] has identified seven areas of family functioning that are impacted by addiction: roles, rituals, routines, finances, communications, conflict and social life.

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Factors Contributing to Drug Abuse

A World Health Organization (WHO) report, entitled “Neuroscience of Psychoactive Substance Use and Dependence”, details many environmental and individual factors, including genetics that contribute to Substance Abuse and Addiction. Genetics contribute to the increased likelihood that an individual will abuse drugs, and to what extent the substance abuse may escalate. Environmental risk factors include availability of drugs, poverty, social changes, peer influences, employment status, type of occupation and cultural attitudes. Individual risk factors include: being a victim of child abuse, personality disorders, extreme changes in family situation, inter-family dependence problems, academic stress, poor academic performance, social deprivation, depression, and suicidal behavior. College student are particularly influenced by a number of different factors: including peer pressure, separation from family and friends, academic performance pressures, and biological mental duress. All can be contributing factors of substance abuse.

Environmental Causes of Substance Abuse and Addiction

Some of our earliest interactions in life play the biggest roles in our development. From early childhood to the ongoing development into adulthood, our relationships with family and peers have some of the greatest influence on the development of addictions. Conflict within the household can amplify stress and cause some to seek an escape through these substances. Stressors can develop as a result of a variety of environmental factors. For example, children exposed to criminal behavior and family members who abuse drugs/alcohol are at a greater risk of developing their own problems. The earlier in life a person is exposed to illicit substances, the higher the risk.

The strength of relationships within the family, structure of authority and overall happiness can affect the development and acceleration of abuse. While the family is not the sole source of influence on many young adults, they play one of the most critical roles as they determine an individual's earliest social interactions.

Individual and Genetic Causes of Substance Abuse & Addiction

Biology plays a critical role in predisposition to addictive behaviors especially if the individual's first experience with abuse is early in life. Experimentation during the most critical stage of development can affect susceptibility and lead many into more serious abuse. During adolescent years, the brain is developing its ability to assess situations and manage emotions. Exposure to drugs and/or alcohol

during this process can result in increased risk for poor decision-making and lead many towards riskier behavior. Trying drugs and continued use can have a substantial impact on mental functioning and cause long-lasting, potentially irreversible, consequences.

School & Peers

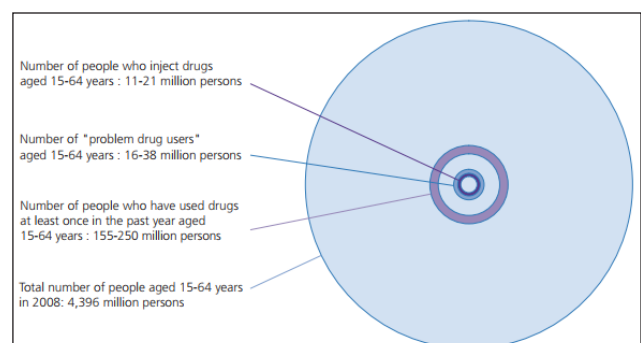
For many, college is the first time a young adult is away from family and friends. Thrust into an unknown world, the desire for companionship can lead many towards dangerous lifestyle changes. College is an impressionable time where the process of self-discovery leads some off track especially when guided by desire for acceptance, no matter the recourse. Recreational drug abuse and binge drinking have become normative behaviors among college-aged students. Popular media continues to portray drugs and alcohol as acceptable, enjoyable ways to relate to others and have a good time. Peer pressure can make even the most steadfast young adult submit to experimentation and a “just this once” mindset. Even with no other risk factors present, peer pressure can be one of the most influential forces in an individual's life.

Combating Risk Factors of Substance Abuse

Risk factors can influence young adults in a variety of ways. The more risks present in an individual's life, the more likely drug and/or alcohol addiction may develop. Risk factors become more influential during particular stages of life and can affect individuals differently depending on their own unique experiences. For most, the key to combating risk factors is a healthy balance between those and protective factors. Protective factors include parental supervision, academic competence and a strong sense of self-control and self-worth.

Drugs Types

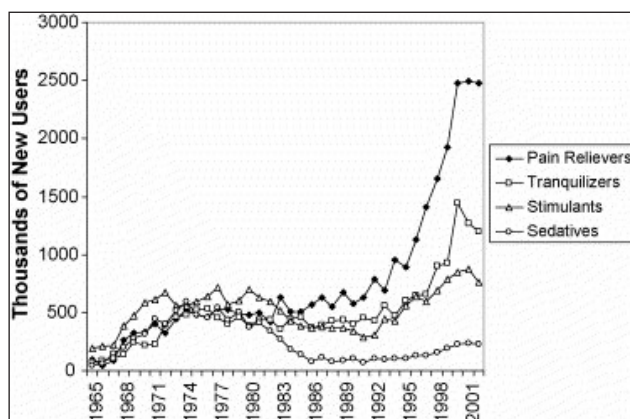
Many different types of drugs are manufactured by the pharmaceutical industry in the country. It pays to know some facts about various drugs to protect oneself against drug abuse. Drugs are classified as legal and illegal and also prescription drugs. One caught in possession of or found



consuming illegal drugs can be sentenced to prison by a law court. However, not all legal drugs are as benign as they are made to appear with hundreds of thousands of people losing their lives around the world with so called legal drugs such as alcohol and tobacco. This article attempts to find out differences between legal and illegal drugs to enable readers to take informed decisions.

Legal Drugs

Drugs are chemicals that are known to change the way a body functions. People take them when they are ill and when the doctor prescribes them these medicines. Medicines are legal when they are taken in proper doses and when they are prescribed by doctors. However, drug abuse is termed illegal. People indulge in an illegal act when they sell or buy and possess and consume drugs banned in a country. Tobacco and alcohol are two drugs that are legal in most countries though an individual lower than the age of 18 buying tobacco and one lower than 21 buying alcohol is considered illegal in US.



Nicotine

About one-third of people who inhale or ingest nicotine end up getting addicted. Once that happens, it's very difficult to give it up, as anyone who has tried to quit smoking will readily admit. Nicotine is subsequently a stimulant and a relaxant. It induces a pleasant, happy sensation, while also providing a rush of adrenaline, increasing the heart rate and blood pressure. Nicotine is available in the form of cigarettes, cigars, chewing "smokeless" tobacco and pipe tobacco. E-cigarette use is on the rise, which cuts out the tobacco but still involves the highly addictive nicotine.

Although cigarette smoking has waned somewhat in recent years, nearly 40 million adults in the U.S. currently smoke cigarettes. The CDC says cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the U.S., responsible for more than 480,000 deaths annually. As for chewing tobacco, at least 28 chemicals in the product have been found to cause cancer.

Alcohol

Alcohol is legal for adults 21 and older to purchase and consume, but it is another highly addictive substance. Alcohol is found in most grocery stores, pharmacies, restaurants, sports venues and more. The liquid substance is commonly available in three forms (from weakest to strongest): beer, wine and hard liquor (aka spirits).

Alcohol is a depressant that initially makes the user happy and less reserved, while also dulling most pain. Excessive alcohol consumption impairs judgment and depth perception, and can cause drowsiness, excessive rage, unconsciousness and even blackouts. Long-term alcohol use can lead to liver and nerve damage, sexual problems, high blood pressure, permanent brain damage and deterioration of motor skills. Alcohol abuse has the potential to tear apart families, in addition to being a risk for a number of severe health conditions. When people are admitted into an addiction treatment program, alcohol is cited as one of the leading causes. The CDC estimated excessive alcohol use led to 88,000 deaths in the U.S. between 2006 and 2010.

OxyContin

OxyContin (which contains the active ingredient oxycodone) is a legal opioid that is generally prescribed to relieve moderate to severe pain. This medication is also abused by others on a non-prescription basis because it can produce feelings of euphoria. OxyContin is a slow-release painkiller that doesn't fully kick in until 12 hours after consumption.

OxyContin is not prescribed on an "as needed" basis for pain. This narcotic is never prescribed to children, and those who mix it with alcohol can suffer an accidental overdose. OxyContin is not quite as strong as heroin (an illegal opioid), but it's one of the most addictive legal drugs, nonetheless. OxyContin abuse was actually on a downward trend from 2010 to 2012, but unfortunately heroin use rose during that time.

Caffeine

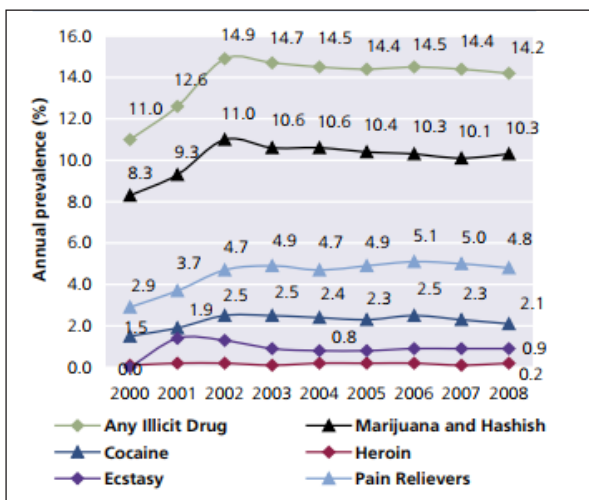
Everyone's everyday drink contains heavy amount of caffeine, which is the most commonly consumed psychoactive substance in the world. Not only is caffeine found in coffee, but it comes in tea, chocolate, soda and many other items we eat and drink, which is why it's hard to abstain from it. A Gallup poll in 2015 found that nearly two-thirds of adult Americans drink at least one cup of coffee a day.

Moderate amounts of caffeine are said to be healthy, but too much of the substance can cause insomnia, nervousness, twitching, increased heart rate and even vomiting. Caffeine

consumers can build up a tolerance to the substance, requiring more and more of it to feel satisfied. Heavy caffeine use can lead to a litany of withdrawal symptoms when not on the substance, such as headaches, lethargy, depression, constipation, dizziness, muscle cramping, nausea and irregular heart rate.

Illegal Drugs

Whenever we think or hear of the phrase illegal drugs, images of marijuana, charas, LSD, and other psychotic and hallucinogenic come across our minds. Cocaine, heroin, Cannabis, etc. are some of the popularly known illegal drugs. However, abuse of legal drugs is also considered illegal in many jurisdictions. Illegal drugs or controlled drugs carry penalties for consumption and even possession. There are classes of these drugs with different penalties for different classes of different drugs. Thus, all drugs that are banned or prohibited by law in a country can be considered as illegal. One found in possession or dealing in these drugs has to face legal proceedings with a possible prison sentence.



Cannabis

Cannabis is a natural plant and is used in three main forms. The most common type is called resin, which comes as solid dark-colored lumps or blocks. Less common are the leaves and stalks of the plant, called grass or weed. The third kind, cannabis oil, is rarely seen in Ireland. Cannabis is usually rolled with tobacco into a 'joint' or 'spliff' and smoked, but it can also be cooked and eaten.

- **Effects:** Getting 'stoned' on cannabis makes you feel relaxed, talkative and happy. Some people feel time slows down and they also report a greater appreciation of colors, sounds and tastes. You can develop strong cravings for food, called 'the munchies'.
- **Side-effects:** Cannabis can affect your memory and concentration and can leave you tired and lacking

motivation. If you are not used to cannabis or you use a stronger type than you are used to you can feel anxiety, panic or confusion. You may have delusions or hallucinations.

- **Risks:** Many people consider cannabis to be a relatively safe drug. But research shows that long-term users can find it hard to control their use of the drug and may become addicted. Smoking cannabis increases your risk of heart disease and cancers such as lung cancer and may also affect your fertility. In people who have underlying mental health problems, cannabis use may trigger schizophrenia. In Ireland it is the second most common drug found in the systems of drink drivers, after alcohol.

Ecstasy

Ecstasy is usually made in back-street laboratories in some European countries. It is sold mainly as tablets which have different logos or designs on them. Sometimes ecstasy tablets can contain other drugs and substances.

- **Effects:** Ecstasy can make you feel more alert and in tune with your surroundings. You feel happy and calm and have a warm feeling towards other people. Sounds, colors and emotions are more intense. You have more energy which allows you to dance for long periods of time.
- **Side-effects:** Your body temperature, blood pressure and heart-rate can rise. Other physical effects include muscle pain, nausea, jaw stiffness and teeth grinding. You may experience severe sweating, shaking and palpitations. You can feel dehydrated, confused and tired.
- **Risks:** Most legal drugs are tested on animals first, but ecstasy users are human guinea pigs. Research already shows that regular weekend users experience a mid-week 'crash' that can leave them feeling tired and depressed, often for days. It could be years before we know the long-term effects but some users may be at risk of developing mental health problems later in life. Deaths from ecstasy are quite rare, but can be due to heatstroke, heart attacks or asthma attacks.

Heroin

Heroin is made from morphine, one of the drugs that comes from the opium poppy. It is used by injecting or by smoking, known as 'chasing the dragon'.

- **Effects:** Injecting heroin gives a quick rush of excitement followed by a peaceful, dreamlike feeling. You feel warm, relaxed and drowsy. Pain, aggression and your sex drive are all reduced.
- **Side-effects:** The side-effects of heroin and other

opiates (such as morphine and methadone) include constipation and weaker breathing. However, most of the dangers of heroin come from overdose and from injecting the drug.

- **Risks:** What is sold on the streets as heroin often contains other substances, such as sugar, flour, talcum powder or other drugs. These substances may seem harmless, but if you inject them they can cause huge damage to your body, such as blood clots, abscesses and gangrene. HIV and hepatitis B and C can be spread through sharing needles. Using heroin regularly will often lead to addiction, especially if you inject. Methadone is used as a replacement drug to treat heroin addiction. It comes in the form of a green liquid, which you drink once a day to keep away the cravings for heroin. The most serious risk from methadone is death by overdose.

Cocaine

Cocaine is a white powder made from the leaves of the coca plant, which grows mainly in South America. It is usually used by snorting the powder up the nose. 'Crack' is not a different drug but a more addictive form of cocaine. Crack, also called 'rock', 'stone' or 'free-base', is usually smoked. Cocaine is sometimes injected or eaten.

- **Effects:** Cocaine is a powerful stimulant. It makes you feel more alert and energetic and also less hungry or thirsty. These effects can last for up to 20 minutes after each use. Smoking crack cocaine gives a shorter but more intense high.
- **Side-effects:** Due to its powerful effects, cocaine users are often left craving more. Large doses can make you exhausted, anxious and depressed, and sometimes aggressive.
- **Risks:** Snorting cocaine can cause permanent damage to the inside of your nose. Cocaine use can damage your heart and lungs, and high doses can cause death from heart attacks or blood clots. Taking cocaine with alcohol increases the risk of heart attack and death. Eating cocaine can damage bowel tissue. The depression that follows the high can be severe and can lead to suicide attempts. With long-term or binge use, the excitement caused by cocaine can turn to restlessness, sleep loss and weight loss. Some people develop a paranoid psychosis where they may be violent. The strong cravings for cocaine, especially crack, can make you want to take the drug all the time and you can lose control of your drug use.

Amphetamines

Amphetamines are a group of stimulant drugs, some of

which were used in the past as slimming tablets. They usually come as a white-grey powder, sold in folded paper packages called 'wraps'. They are usually swallowed but can also be injected or snorted. A type known as 'ice' or 'crystal' can be smoked.

- **Effects:** These depend on how you take the drug. A small dose by mouth makes you feel more alert and energetic. Higher doses that you inject or smoke give a rush of pleasure. Some speed users go on binges and become overactive and talkative.
- **Side-effects:** As with other stimulant drugs, you experience a crash after the high caused by the drug. High doses of amphetamines can cause panic, paranoia and hallucinations. With long-term use, you can develop a condition known as 'amphetamine psychosis', with symptoms like schizophrenia. The paranoia can cause you to become violent if you believe you are being threatened or persecuted.
- **Risks:** Amphetamine psychosis can continue after you have stopped using the drug. If you become aggressive or violent, you could get into dangerous situations. The risks from injecting are the same as other drugs, such as heroin.

Solvents

Solvents include products found in most homes, such as glues, paint thinner, nail polish remover, lighter fuels and aerosol sprays such as deodorants. You can inhale them from a soaked rag, coat sleeve or directly from a bottle. You spray aerosols directly into your mouth. Solvent abuse is most common among teenagers. For most teenagers it is a passing fad, but it can cause them huge problems at school and at home.

- **Effects:** Inhaling solvents can give a high or 'buzz' which is like feeling drunk. The effects usually wear off after about half an hour. You may look drunk, with slurred speech, staggering, giggling and lack of control and you can feel drowsy afterwards.
- **Side-effects:** Your judgement can be affected and you can become aggressive. Hallucinations, vomiting and blackouts are also common. You usually have a hangover after use, with headache and poor concentration.
- **Risks:** Death from solvent abuse is rare but it can happen for a number of reasons and can happen the first time you do it. Under the influence of solvents, you are more likely to have accidents. You may also choke or suffocate – on the solvent you spray into your lungs, on your vomit or on the materials you use to help inhale the solvent. Many solvents can also cause heart failure.

LSD

LSD usually comes as tiny tablets known as 'dots' or 'tabs', in or on small squares of paper or cardboard. Tabs usually have pictures or logos on them. You swallow the tabs.

- **Effects:** LSD is a hallucinogenic drug. About one hour after taking a tab, it causes a 'trip' where your surroundings look different, with colors, sounds and objects appearing unreal or abnormal. During a trip you may have visions and hear voices and time seems to slow down or speed up. The effects can last for around 12 hours.
- **Side-effects:** It's hard to predict what kind of trip you will have. During a bad trip, you may feel terrified, feel you are losing control, going mad or dying. A bad trip is more likely if you are already feeling anxious or depressed before taking the drug.
- **Risks:** A bad trip can trigger mental illness in some people. Good trips can also be dangerous, for example if you believe you can fly or walk on water. You can also get flashbacks, where you feel you are back on a trip for a short period of time, during the weeks and months after a trip. These flashbacks can be distressing. Magic mushrooms are hallucinogenic mushrooms that grow in the wild. You can eat them raw or cooked, or made into a tea. The effects of magic mushrooms are similar to a mild, shorter LSD trip. As with LSD, you can have bad trips that could be frightening. There is also the risk that you might eat poisonous mushrooms by mistake, thinking they are magic mushrooms.

Prevention of Drug Abuse

While it's practically impossible to prevent anyone and everyone from using drugs, there are things we can all do to avoid drug and/or alcohol abuse. By sharing this knowledge with those closest to you, you yourself may be able to prevent them from doing drugs, too. Here are the top five ways to help prevent drug abuse:

| Risk Factors | Domain | Protective Factors |
|------------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|
| Early Aggressive Behavior | Individual | Impulse Control |
| Lack of Parental Supervision | Family | Parental Monitoring |
| Substance Abuse | Peer | Academic Competence |
| Drug Availability | School | Antidrug Use Policies |
| Poverty | Community | Strong Neighborhood Attachment |

- **Effectively deal with peer pressure:** The biggest reason teens start using drugs is because their friends utilize

peer pressure. No one likes to be left out, and teens (and yes, some adults, too) find themselves doing things they normally wouldn't do, just to fit in. In these cases, you need to either find a better group of friends that won't pressure you into doing harmful things, or you need to find a good way to say no. Teens should prepare a good excuse or plan ahead of time, to keep from giving into tempting situations.

- **Deal with life pressure:** People today are overworked and overwhelmed, and often feel like a good break or a reward is deserved. But in the end, drugs only make life more stressful — and many of us all too often fail to recognize this in the moment. To prevent using drugs as a reward, find other ways to handle stress and unwind. Take up exercising, read a good book, volunteer with the needy, and create something. Anything positive and relaxing helps take the mind off using drugs to relieve stress.
- **Seek help for mental illness:** Mental illness and substance abuse often go hand-in-hand. Those with a mental illness may turn to drugs as a way to ease the pain. Those suffering from some form of mental illness, such as anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress disorder should seek the help of a trained professional for treatment before it leads to substance abuse.
- **Examine the risk factors:** If you're aware of the biological, environmental and physical risk factors you possess, you're more likely to overcome them. A history of substance abuse in the family, living in a social setting that glorifies drug abuse and/or family life that models drug abuse can be risk factors.
- **Keep a well-balanced life:** People take up drugs when something in their life is not working, or when they're unhappy about their lives or where their lives are going. Look at life's big picture, and have priorities in order.
- **Connecting:** Getting in contact with people, NGO's or organization that are basically setup for preventing people from using drugs or helping them to get out of their addiction problems. Every country has a NGO setup that helps people of such cases.

Summery

Psychoactive drugs change cognitions, emotions, and behavior. Drugs, per se, are neither good nor bad. People use psychoactive drugs for medicinal and recreational reasons. Regardless of the initial reason for using a drug, some people misuse and even abuse some psychoactive drugs because of the drugs' effects on mood, thought, and behavior. How people administer the drug (by ingestion, injection, inhalation, or absorption through the skin) affects how fast and intense the drug's effects are. The route of administration can affect how quickly the drug is absorbed into the bloodstream, how rapidly it is broken down, and

how long it takes to be excreted from the body. The primary site of action for psychoactive drugs is the synapse of neurons in the brain. Often drugs work by either mimicking or blocking the actions of one or more neurotransmitters in the CNS. All drugs have multiple effects, and most are toxic at some dose. Dependence, withdrawal, and/or tolerance develop to some of the effects of most, but not all, psychoactive drugs.

Psychoactive drugs can be categorized many different ways. For example, by chemical structure, whether their use is legal or illegal, or the type of CNS or behavioral effects they produce. Stimulants, like cocaine and amphetamines, increase neuronal and behavioral activity. Depressants, like alcohol, reduce neuronal and behavioral activity. Opiates, some having legal uses (e.g., morphine) and others not (e.g., heroin), reduce pain and, in high enough doses, cause an addictive "rush." Low doses of marijuana have a mellowing, mildly euphoric effect, whereas very high doses can cause hallucinations. Drugs like LSD, MDMA, and PCP are all classified as hallucinogens because at even low doses they cause sensory and perceptual distortions. Although a great deal is known about how many psychoactive drugs act in the brain and affect behavior, researchers continue to identify the most effective pharmacological, cognitive, and behavioral treatments for persons who abuse these drugs.

Drug abuse is a very common and major problem related to health and social issues which is associated with comorbidities and complications. The initiation of drug abuse at early adolescence result in continuation of drug to the adulthood. Therefore, preventive strategies are required to be planned and suggested for drug abuse. More studies on drug abuse are required to be done in India to see the current situations and to find out the solutions for this situation. As most of the studies are either done on small scale on school children or street children, this is the demand of the hour for the bright future of nation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the detrimental impacts that abusing prescription drugs has among adolescents is clear. Partnering with the community to address this issue is integral to preparing teenagers to better understand how to use prescription drugs safely. There continues to be an urgency created by this alarming trend, which requires immediate attention from all parties involved. The responsibility to help keep children and adolescents safe falls to all of us. Taking action now and educating students about the dangers of prescription drugs is the first step among many to eliminating this increasingly negative trend.

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