

ASSESSMENT OF KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES OF MEDICAL STUDENTS REGARDING THE DRUG ADDICTION IN PUNJAB, INDIA

Preet Sood¹, Krishna Tanwar²

¹Professor, Department of Pharmacology, Sriguru Ramdass Institute of Medical Sciences, Vallah, Amritsar, Punjab, India

²Professor, Department of Pharmacology, Lady Hardinge Medical College, New Delhi, India

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Corresponding Author:

Dr. Preet Sood,
Email: preetsood2015@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0001-5489-8109

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Abstract

Background: Addiction can be defined as the loss of control over drug use or compulsive seeking and taking of drugs despite adverse consequences. Youth are most vulnerable out of all age groups. Newly gained independence, free access to the substances and curiosity makes it more appealing. This study was conducted to assess knowledge, attitudes and practices towards the drug addict and addiction. **Materials and Methods:** A cross sectional study was conducted at Sri Guru Ram Dass Institute of Medical Sciences, Amritsar among 2nd year medical students. A structured questionnaire was used and data obtained was analyzed by graph pad Instat software. **Result:** The participants were aware of psychological dependence and its role in addiction, therapeutic failure of drugs in addicts & the role of good prescription in avoiding drug misuse. Good number of subjects were positive for the treatment and rehabilitation of addicts, role of family environment & society in de addiction. Participants confesses of reading about addiction and agreed on seeing addict patients. **Conclusion:** Most of the participants were well aware about the addiction, drugs of abuse and role of a doctor and society in its prevention.

INTRODUCTION

Drug addiction is being common issue in society since ages. Modern youth is more vulnerable due to over exposure to digital media, easy availability of drugs, even provoking songs also play a major role.

Alcohol is most commonly used all over the world. Initially family and guardians' unawareness lead to difficulty in prevention in later years. Economic, social transitions and exposure to digital world are other illiciting factors contributing to it.

In Indian subcontinent, especially north India drug menace is a common problem. Medical students use it due to different reasons; to allay the fatigue and stress of studies.^[1] Curiosity, to feel sociable and influence of environment can be the other reasons. Easy access to drugs which can be misused is another factor.^[2]

Over the period, drug abusers face many social and physical problems like chronic pain, no liking for social contacts, hypertension, injuries and poisonings.^[3] In later years crime can be a part of all the things.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted at Sri Guru Ram Dass Institute of Medical Sciences and Research Amritsar. The idea was perceived from competency PH .5.6.1-5.6.2. of the new curriculum which is specifically assigned for this.

It was a cross sectional study conducted during august 2022. After taking verbal consent from students of 2nd professional, the Performa was distributed. The Performa was structured and validated by fellow colleagues of pharmacology. Participants were briefed about the voluntary nature of the study and the right to withdraw. Only willing participants were allowed to proceed with filling out the questionnaire.

A pilot trial was done on 3 students of the same batch which were later not added in the study. A questionnaire with 34 items was formulated (16 in knowledge, 10 in attitude and 8 in practice). Time allotted was 1 hour. Student needed to tick yes/no/don't know in knowledge and attitude part while in practice only yes /no option was to be chosen. All 138 students present in class participated in the trial.

Content of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire included multiple choice questions designed to assess participants socio demographic characteristics and KAP in context of drug abuse. Socio demographic information comprised age, sex and residence. Knowledge part of questionnaire included about the awareness of drug as social menace .Being the participants 2nd year medical student ,few questions in relation to use of drugs (medicine) as abuse substances were also added .In part on attitude, how they think about drug abuse as a person or as a part of society. The level of their awareness and attitude as a part of society was also tried to assess. Questions on rehabilitation of drug abusers and role of family society were also included. Question on practice section were to judge how a particular segment (here budding doctors) behave with drugs. It was to judge their curiosity/seriousness on this very important issue prevalent in Punjab.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to calculate percentage using graphpad instat. Each correct answer were given one point. Total scores were then converted to percentages.

Implication of Study

The study findings provide a useful insight into KAP of medical students for drug abuse in Punjab. It can be of great help in dealing drug menace as youth are the mirror of society.

RESULTS

Out of the 138 students who participated in the study,61% were female while 39% were males. More than half the participants lived in hostel at Vallah.

Table 1: Shows the socio demographic characteristics of study participants

	Categories
Age(years)	19-21
Sex	Female 67
	Male 70
Education	MBBS 2nd year
Residence	Hostelier-80
	Day scholars-58

Most of the student were aware of drug and its addiction

Table 2: Knowledge of the participants about drug abuse (n=138)

S. No	Item	Yes %	NO %	Don't know
1	All illegal drugs are equally harmful to your health	28(39)	67 (92)	05(7)
2	Alcohol abuse causes more problems in society than drugs abuse	37 (51)	45 (62)	18 (25)
3	Treatment should be only given to drug addicts who intend to give up drugs for good	19 (26)	75 (104)	06(8)
4	Excessive use of tea /coffee also like drug addiction	60 (83)	26 (36)	14 (19)
5	Money spent on the prevention of drug use, is money well spent	89 (123)	05(46)	06(8)
6	Occasional use of cannabis is not really dangerous	38 (52)	33(46)	29 (40)
7	Most people are concerned about the drug problem in PUNJAB	80 (110)	12 (17)	08 (11)
8	Medically prescribed heroin substitutes should be available for terminally ill patients	85(117)	08(11)	07 (10)
9	Drugs education in school should start at primary level	91(126)	05(7)	04 (55)
10	Overuse of prescribed drugs can leads to drug abuse	92 (130)	06(8)	02 (3)
11	Tramadol is a drug of abuse	60 (83)	17(23)	23 (32)
12	Family /society play an important role in addiction	93(128)	03(4)	04 (56)
13	Methadone substitution therapy is used in Alcohol	46(63)	43 (59)	11 (16)
14	Disufiram is part of treatment in Cannabis de addiction	23(32)	51 (70)	26 (36)
15	Psychological dependence is important part of addiction	88 (121)	03 (4)	30 (42)
16	Orphan drugs and drug of abuse are same	02 (28)	63 (87)	35 (48)
17	Drug addiction leads to therapeutic failure of many drugs	85(116)	04 (6)	11(16)
18	A good prescription can avoid drug dependence to some extent	98 (134)	01(2)	01 (2)

Table 3: Attitude of participants towards drug abuse (n=138)

S. No	Item	YES %	NO%	Don't know%
1	Our society is too tolerant toward drug user	23 (32)	58 (80)	19 (26)
2	I would see drug addict more as criminal than victim	15 (21)	82 (113)	03 (4)
3	I would tend to avoid someone who is drug addict	49 (66)	34 (47)	17 (24)
4	I would be nervous of someone who uses illegal drug	65 (91)	23 (32)	11(15)
5	Drug addicts are not given a fair chance to get along in society	69 (95)	16 (22)	15 (21)
6	People who end up with drug problem have only themselves to blame	18 (26)	68(95)	12 (17)
7	Treatment should be available to all drug addict according to their needs	97 (134)	02 (3)	01 (1)
8	Family environment plays important role in drug addiction	92 (127)	05 (7)	01(1)
9	Tougher sentence for drug misusers the best answer to the drug problem	19 (26)	62 (86)	17 (26)
10	Many drug addicts exaggerate their troubles to get sympathy	57 (79)	20 (27)	23 (32)

Table 4: Practices of participants related to drug abuse (n=138)

S.no	Item	YES %	NO%
1	Tried drugs of Abuse	4 (55)	96 (133)
2	Addicted to a drug	01 (01)	99(137)
3	Read about drug addiction	95 (131)	05 (7)
4	See addicted patients	66 (91)	34 (47)
5	Participated in treatment	10 (14)	90 (124)
6	Advised an addict	42 (57)	58 (81)

The participants awareness for psychological dependence and its role in addiction was quite promising (88%). Question to assess the drugs of abuse vs orphan drugs was not known to most of students (02%).

Most of them were knowing the association of therapeutic failure of drugs in addicts (85%). The participants were also knowing the role of good prescription in avoiding drug dependence (98%). In attitude part of questionnaire, good number of subjects were positive for the treatment and rehabilitation of the addicts (97%) & role of family environment in de addiction were also considerable (92%)

Society is not kind to the recovered addicts was supported by 68% and discomfort on someone known to be addicted is surprisingly high (65%) More than half of participants (57%) thought that addicts increase their troubles to get sympathy. In practice part, 94% participants confesses of reading about addiction and 66% agreed on seeing addict patients. No one confesses of self-addiction and only 3% confesses of trying a drug of abuse even once.

DISCUSSION

Though this study was conducted in medical students but here the aim was to judge their awareness about abuse of drug /medicine and addiction. The emphasis was on how easy availability of drug can effect their attitude and practice in future. The results are similar to the study conducted on same parameters.^[6]

Results are found similar with other studies,^[7] while a study in kenya give opposite result in drug use by students (51%) as compared to our study (03%), this may be due to easy availability of drugs and alcohol in Kenya.^[8]

To avoid the bias very less question on personal use of drugs were asked. In other studies very high rate of addiction in medical students like 69.8% in Kenya and 62.4% in Ethiopian study was found, in our study no one reported to be addict.^[8,9] This is may be attributed to the stigma associated with it. Certain studies in India & in other countries have revealed similar pattern in relation to assessment of psychological stress, lifestyle, attitude towards addicts.^[10-17]

The study has certain limitations, it's a single center study, only medical students were enrolled, factors for parent student were not assessed. Regression

analysis could not be performed owing to the smaller sample size.^[18]

CONCLUSION

Future doctors are aware about the consequences of addiction and also understands the role of good prescription and family environment. Still from school level efforts should be done by all to eradicate drug menace.

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