ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Pattern & Legal Consequences in Hospitalised Drug Abusers

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Abstract: *The present study includes the sample from the Deaddiction Ward, SMS Hospital, Jaipur. The patients were admitted, assessed on socio-demographic basis & substance abuse and then results were drawn. 70% patients were found to be alcoholics, while 20% were multiple substance abusers. 64% of patients were belonging to age group 31-50 years. All were male. 70% belonged to urban area. 10% of patients were found to abuse newer drugs. History of violence was present in 26% of the patients and among them 18% were alcoholics. 6% of patients had faced the legal consequences.*

Key Words: *Substance use, legal problems*

INTRODUCTION

The history of drug-addiction is going hand in hand with the history of human civilization. The abbrient drug has a place in our mythology also, where it has been described as Somrasa. With the technical development of human civilization the form of drug has changed a lot. Previously the crude drugs were in use while with the availability of new instruments for processing of these crude chemicals, the drugs are now available in more potent and concentrated form. The abuse of drug is also influenced by the availability of the drug, abuser's psychological state, economical condition, social status social beliefs and community norms in which he lives.

The NSDUH suggests that nearly 6 million individuals in the US experience an arrest annually and that nearly half meet criteria for Substance Used Disorder. [1] Varying courses of offending may have plausible causal effects on young adult outcomes beyond the effects of an underlying propensity for crime. [2]

Considering all these facts, the following study was planned with following aims :

1. To study the socio-demographic variables of the drug-abusers; 2. To study the pattern of drug abuse; 3. To study legal consequences associated with drug addiction.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted with subjects from the Deaddiction ward, a unit of Dept. of Psychiatry, S.M.S. Medical College, Jaipur. This ward is situated in the main building of S.M.S. Hospital while the Department of Psychiatry is situated away from this building. The faculty members of this department along with the Resident Doctors run this unit. This is a 20-bedded unit where those patients are kept for detoxification that does not respond to ambulatory treatment.

This study includes 100 consecutive patients admitted in this ward. The patients were diagnosed as per ICD-10 criteria[3]. They were assessed in detail at the time of admission regarding their socio-demographic data and pattern of drug abuse. The subjects upon admission if found to have previous or concurrent psychiatric illness were not included in the study. The finding were recorded in a specially designed semi-structured proforma and kept for the future reference. From the information thus obtained, the observations were drawn & tabulated.

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Table 1

Socio-Demographic Profile of Drug Abusers

Variable	Alcohol (N=50)	Cannabis (N=2)	Opium (N=12)	Multiple (N=20)	Nicotine (N=6)		Others (N=10)	Total (N=100)
					Tobacco (N=4)	Gutkha (N=2)		
Age (in yrs)								
21-30	4 (8%)	2 (100%)	6 (50%)	2 (10%)	4 (100%)	2 (100%)	10 (100%)	30 (30%)
31-40	24 (48%)	-	2 (16.6%)	14 (70%)	-	-	-	40 (40%)
41-50	18 (36%)	-	2 (16.6%)	4 (20%)	-	-	-	24 (24%)
> 50	4 (8%)	-	2 (16.6%)	0	0	0	0	6 (6%)
Marital Status								
Unmarried	8 (16%)	2 (100%)	-	2 (10%)	-	2 (100%)	10 (100%)	24 (24%)
Married	38 (76%)	-	10 (83.3%)	18(90%)	4 (100%)	-	-	70 (70%)
Divorced/ Separated	4 (8%)	-	-	-	-	-	-	4 (4%)
Widow/ Remarried	-	-	2 (16.6%)	-	-	-	-	2 (2%)
Education								
Illiterate	2 (4%)	-	6 (50%)	-	-	-	-	8 (8%)
Upto 8th	8 (16%)	2 (100%)	2 (16.6%)	4 (20%)	-	-	-	16 (16%)
9 to 12th	18 (36%)	-	4 (33.3%)	2 (10%)	-	-	6 (60%)	30 (30%)
Graduate/ P.G.	22 (44%)	-	-	14(70%)	4 (100%)	2 (100%)	4 (40%)	46 (46%)
Religion								
Hindu	46 (92%)	2 (100%)	10 (83.3%)	20(100%)	4 (100%)	2 (100%)	10(100%)	94 (94%)
Muslim	4 (8%)	-	2 (16.6%)	-	-	-	-	6 (6%)
Origin								
Rural	14 (28%)	-	4 (33.3%)	4 (20%)	4 (100%)	-	4 (40%)	30 (30%)
Urban	36 (72%)	2 (100%)	8 (66.6%)	16 (80%)	-	2 (100%)	6 (60%)	70 (70%)

All Patients were male,
Multiple drug abuse category as per ICD-10 criteria.

Table 2

Types of Legal Offences in Different types of Drug Abusers (N = 100)

S. No.	Legal consequences	Alcohol	Opium	Multiple	Total
1.	Violence Present	18 (18%)	6 (6%)	2 (2%)	26 (26%)
2.	Apprehended by police	4 (4%)	2 (2%)	0	6 (6%)
	A. For Traffic rules	4 (4%)	0	0	4 (4%)
	B. For theft	0	2 (2%)	0	2 (2%)

RESULTS

50% of patients were pure alcoholics while 20% were abusing multiple drugs. All the multiple drug abusers were alcoholic. Hence we can see that 70% of total patients were alcoholic. Isolated cannabis abuse was found only in 2% of patients while 40% of multiple drug abusers were consuming cannabis thus total cannabis abuse comes to be 10% of total sample. 12% patients were abusing only opium.

Among multiple drug abuse 100% were alcoholics along with the other drugs, while 50% were addicted to Benzodiazepines along with other drugs. 10% of the total sample was suffering from addiction to pharmacotherapeutic agents for example Alprazolam, Codeine, Dextro-propoxyphene, and Diazepam.

Overall, most abusers were in the age group of 21 to 40 years. 84% of alcoholics were belonging to the age group of 31-50 years. Multiple drug abuse was most common (70%) in the age group of 31-40 years. Pharmaco-therapeutic agent's addiction shows little age variation with 100% cases in the age group of 21 to 30 years.

76% of alcoholics, 83.33% of opium addicts, 90% of multiple drug abusers and 100% of pharmacotherapeutic agent abusers were married. 80% of alcoholics were well educated while 50% opium addicts were illiterate. 70% of multiple drug abusers were graduate/post graduate. Most of the cases followed Hindu religion, rest were Muslims.

72% of alcoholics, 66.66% of opium addicts, 80% of multiple-drug abusers were belonging to urban area with total of 70% of the sample size Legal consequences were present in 38% of total sample. 26% of patients were involved in violent activities among them 18% were alcoholics. A total of 6% were apprehended. Among these, 4% were those who broke traffic rule and were found to be alcoholic.

DISCUSSION

In our study the maximum number of abusers was belonging to the age group of 31-40 years while others found that the maximum number of abusers were in the age group of 20-29 years. The sequential or concomitant use of drugs has a correlation with age and reflects the increasing time and opportunity for contacts with drugs in elder groups.[5-9]

Previously it was found that married persons were most commonly abusing the drugs,[4] so is the finding of this study, because with marriage and social responsibilities the stress also increases.

Our study found that substance abuse increases with the increase in educational level[4]. Possible explanation may be that they are more prone to stress, which leads them to abuse these substances. These people also understand the harmful effect of these drugs thus they come across the medical detoxification facilities frequently.

In some studies most of the patients were tobacco abusers[4,9] while one study showed that alcohol, tobacco and painkillers were most commonly used substances.[10] In our study most of the patients were alcoholics. This difference can be seen due to the different study settings, since our study is based on the sample that presents for detoxification in the hospital. Generally tobacco abusers are managed on an OPD basis.

Isolated cannabis abuse was found in only two patients in our study. The social acceptance and lack of physical and psychological dependence on this substance is responsible for such a low admission rates in the special ward for the purpose of detoxification.

All the multiple drug abusers show alcohol addiction, which reflects the easy availability of this substance as compared to the others.

Among the multiple drug abusers this study found that both the opium dependent patients were alcoholics which is similar to some earlier reports that say that in the case of non-availability of opioids this substance was used to control physical withdrawal, craving and/or feeling of emptiness. [9,11]

Among the "others" group all the drugs, which the patients consumed, have a sure addiction liability and are mostly available as OTC (over the counter) drugs, at least In India. These drugs are refined chemicals. This shows the changing trends from the crude substances to concentrated forms or those refined chemicals that have a potential to exert a similar effect.

This is very clear from our study that 26% of patients are involved in violent activities which is very close to the observation of earlier studies.[12,13] Among these 18% are alcoholics showing the neuropharmacological effects of this substance on the person. The other reason for this high number may be the easy availability of this drug. Subjects with alcohol or drug use disorders were more than twice as likely as those with schizophrenia to report violent behavior.[14] The criminal justice system in UK is heavily burdened with people with serious problems: 60% of people arrested tested positive for illegal drugs, nearly 20% of them for opiates. At a conservative estimate, the general costs to the criminal justice system of drug related crime are at least £1 billion every year. [15]

A total of 6% patients faced the legal consequences of this violence. 66.6% of these persons were alcoholics and were involved in breaking traffic laws.

Remaining 33.3% of these, 6% were legally involved subjects, and opium user that were involved in theft, as they needed money for drug purchase. This might be due to the effect of craving, the fear of the withdrawal symptoms of opium or both.

Thus we can conclude that the pattern of drug abuse has changed a lot in past few years with more frequency among urban males and in the vulnerable age that makes them prone to various types of stresses.

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