

An Overview Of Drug Use, Epidemiology, Social Impact Of Drug Abuse And Ethical Problem

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Abstract

Drug use is a grim issue that must be discussed in a comprehensive manner. If such cases are left unattended, the use of drugs often develops into drug dependency. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize the symptoms of drug use as early as possible. If an individual is bothered by his rate of drug use or that of a relative or a friend, there are some common signs that one should look for. It is important to mention that drug abuse is a common problem in the entire world. Drug abuse leads to drug dependence on addiction. Dependence on drugs is often characterized by psychological and behavioral symptoms associated with substance abuse. Some of the common signs include the need for an increased amount of the substance in order to maintain the desired amount and effect of the substance. Withdraws are evident when an addicted person stops taking the substance.

Introduction

Drug use is a grim issue that must be discussed in a comprehensive manner. If such cases are left unattended, the use of drugs often develops into drug dependency. Therefore, it is necessary to recognize the symptoms of drug use as early as possible. If an individual is bothered by his rate of drug use or that of a relative or a friend, there are some common signs that one should look for. It is important to mention that drug abuse is a common problem in the entire world. With the disorder so common, the truth is clear regarding the misconception that many people have about drug abuse. The main objective of this paper is to provide a brief overview of drug use while also focusing on various aspects such as epidemiology, the social impact of drug abuse as well as an ethical problems that may present in an individual with drug problems.

Discussion

People use different drugs for different reasons. In most cases, people use drugs out of inquisitiveness, while others try to have a good time. Others often do it because their friends are doing it. Moreover, athletes often use it to improve their performance in the field or ease other problems they might have, such as anxiety or depression. However, drug use doesn't spontaneously result in abuse, but there is no specific moment at which abuse of drugs shifts from casual to

challenging issues. Drugs and alcohol use is often less about the quality of the drug used and more about the reason why various individuals turn to drugs, as well as the consequences of using a certain drug (Simpson,1979).

Some of the clear signs of drug abuse are those that affect the inner workings of the body. For instance, the tolerance of the body to a certain drug occurs once a drug is abused for a prolonged period, which increases the quantities and strength needed to accomplish the previous impact. The desire for a more intense feeling achieved through these means is extremely dangerous and might result in overdose. The diminishing impact set in after the first use, and the user constantly attempts to replicate that first feeling he or she gets from that specific drug by increasing the amount. One of the common signs of drug abuse is a change in appearance, which can provide clues to possible drug abuse. This might include:

- Bloodshot eyes.
- Dilated Pupils.
- A sudden change in weight.
- Infections or physical signs at drug entrance sights on the body.
- Temporary memory blackout.
- Frequent fights with family members or depression.
- Continued use of alcohol to relax or sleep or deal with other problems to feel normal.
- Anxiety, insomnia, nausea, or other negative signs when an addicted person stops drinking.
- Flushed skin, husky voice, shaky hands, and chronic diarrhea, among other complications.

Drug use and addiction are complex issues that affect people of all ages and backgrounds. It is impossible to tell what makes some people more prone to using drugs than others. It is often a process attributed to numerous factors such as family background, stress, and personal characteristics, among others. It has been suggested that most people who use drugs are usually forced by issues such as trouble at home, psychological problems, and biological issues, among other factors. A common group of drug users is children of drug users. Research shows that the risk of drug abuse often goes up for the children of drug addicts. Children from a parent who uses any form of a drug have a probability of 45 to 79% likelihood of abusing drugs themselves compared to the general population(Simpson, 1997). This might imply that addiction is deep-rooted in genetics, and thus, it might be inherited. However, it could also imply that drug use could be affected by environmental factors such as the background in which the child was raised.

Other groups of people who commonly use drugs are individuals suffering from depression and bipolar disorders. People with various mental problems have a higher likelihood of indulging in substance abuse. The main reason behind this is the fact that a majority of these people often try to medicate themselves using various drugs such as alcohol or cocaine in order to reduce the painful symptoms of their disorder. Drug use has been a huge social problem not only in the United States but also in the entire world. The most interesting this is that most of these drugs were initially used for medical purposes only, and thus, they were legal prescriptions.

Opium

Opium use can be dated back 10,000 years ago. Research shows that some notable Greeks, such as Pythagoras, could not have discovered some of the genius theories without using some forms of drugs. Various texts from ancient history show that there might be some truth in this statement

.Cannabis

This is not a strange drug to many people, with numerous debates taking place regarding its legalization across the world. However, Cannabis has been in use for many centuries, and it is believed that it was first used in ancient Central and South Asia. The drug was usually grown in the past from its hemp fiber in the past, as well as for medical purposes as painkillers by Sikhs for many years. Even though Cannabis is still an illegal drug in most countries, the various instances where the drug has been legalized for medical use, such as treatment of glaucoma and increasing appetite.

Alcohol

Since the dawn of history, people have had to sort various ways of relieving their daily grind of life. In ancient Mesopotamia, agricultural activities flourished, and various communities began to gain prominence. The cultivation of wheat and barley led to the production of beer. Since the water wasn't that clean, the alcohol content killed a lot of harmful germs in the water. While the alcohol content was usually maintained at a low level, it was safe as the idea of sterility was unknown in the 3,000 BCE is often believed that even the gods enjoyed the new product. However, addiction to alcohol was rampant, and most people during that period died at a very young age due to drunkenness.

Cocaine

During the second millennium, world trade grew very fast. Ships began sailing from China to Europe. Cocaine was initially used as a medical drug in Europe for many years before it was used in the United States. After the introduction of Coca-Cola, the company introduced a syrup from the coca plant. One year later, the Surgeon General of the United States approved the medical use of cocaine. Two decades later, the United States was filled with multiple unregulated tonics that contained a high amount of cocaine. By 1902, approximately 200,000 people were addicted to cocaine. In 1914, the drug was prohibited over the decade until it emerged again in the 1970s, when it was now being used for recreational purposes, eventually reaching its peak in 1982. Some suggested that the drug was not addictive and thus relatively harmless until the emergence of crack in 1985.

.Drug addiction often affects the brain as well as the entire organ system of an individual. Drugs and mind-altering substances such as alcohol often target the natural reward system of the body either

intentionally or unintentionally, resulting in a euphoric effect for the user. The impact comes from dopamine, a neurotransmitter that controls cognition, movement, feeling pleasure, and motivation. Dopamine is a naturally released substance that allows a cycle to repeat a behavior. The dopamine neurotransmitters fill up the reward system that is often secreted in small amounts from routine actions such as sex or eating. The brain perceives this as a life-sustaining activity, and thus, the reward system is activated.

When a person takes a certain drug and introduces it to the body system, the euphoric impact is accomplished, and the brain detects that some important event is occurring and automates itself to identify the action as a habit. Taking alcohol or any other illicit drug might cause an individual to act on impulse when the reasoning system of the brain delays or prevents an action. The system is bypassed, thus resulting in undesired activities that might potentially have a negative repercussion on the life of the user. Even though some of the impacts of drugs are euphoric in most cases, other times, a drug might cause paranoia, anxiety, or suicidal thoughts.

If a person continues using drugs, the brain begins to acclimatize to the “flooding” dopamine in the reward system. This results in the reduction of dopamine release over time. As a result, the user’s ability to accomplish the desired effects of the drug is greatly affected. This response by the brain results in the addicted person trying to reactivate the receptors by increasing the dosage in order to feel the same dopamine high. The effect is called tolerance. With long-term use of drugs, other parts of the brain also experience changes. The glutamate is destroyed, causing an inability to learn. When the optimal levels go off balance, the brain tries to compensate, thus resulting in affecting the cognitive function of the user. Once the brain becomes used to the effect of the drug, drug dependence follows, and cessation of the drug abuse causes a situation known as withdrawal. While most withdrawal signs are uncomfortable for an addict, there are serious signs that might include seizures and hallucinations.

Impact Of Drugs On Users And Non-Users

Impact On Family Units

Drug use has numerous effects not only on the user as well as the family. Drug use usually leads to domestic violence. In most cases, the violence often emanates from confrontations regarding the habit of the drug user. The link between drug abuses, unemployment is very evident. Drug users who are initially employed before they indulged in drugs often lose their jobs. As a result, they are forced to borrow a huge amount of money from family members but often face difficulties paying back due to their habits.

Impact On Children

Drug use often has a huge impact on a child's academic performance due to drug use in the family. It is often reported that over one-third of children from a family where a member uses drugs are forced to drop out. Research from Key informants conducted by Anglin, (1992) revealed that some children are usually forced to work since their family members are using drugs and thus are not able to provide for the family. Moreover, the behavior of drug users often affects the response of their children's overall character as they grow.

Impact On Communities

Drug use is usually considered a community problem in various parts of the world. Drug use has adverse effects on the community as a whole since most drug users end up dying due to addiction. Drug use within various communities often has adverse outcomes on the work of various organizations. This is due to the fact drug use creates a negative atmosphere in the workplace and a higher probability of corruption.

How To Stop Drug Abuse

To minimize the burden of drug use has also case countries' criminal justice systems, most countries have come up with drug courts aimed at breaking the pandemic of drug addiction and the cycle of crime. In such coordinated approaches to fighting drug menace, the affected people often receive full treatment services as well as frequent urinalysis and monitoring. Once an addict completes treatment, he is rehabilitated and monitored regularly. Americans are expected to be a drug-free society by 2030, especially in a community where the use of both legal and illegal drug use is very high. While a large number of American citizens are arrested on daily bases and jailed due to possession of prohibited drug substances, the American markets are always flooded with pleasure-inducing substances used for treating various disorders and also to satisfy the instant gratification of the American people (Glaze, 1980).

Any critical review of the current laws, as well as the recommendations for a drastic transformation of the American community, must show proper understanding of the drug paradox in America, It is a country that puts more effort into fighting the drug problem, yet it is the same country that consumes a lot of these drugs than any other nation around the world. Amending more effective laws to counter this issue requires a deep exploration of the historical concept of these substances in society. Furthermore, it also requires a modern attempts to regulate illegal drugs, especially in the United States.

Drug Prohibition Policies

Pleasure-releasing substances use through the ages for different purposes such as religious or medical reasons were controlled through frameworks that acknowledged the illegal substances as sacred. (Eldridge, 1962). However, personal or social problems associated with illegal substances have also been considered since the 1800s. Nowadays in the particular beginning of the colonization in the 16th century, European took these psychoactive substances as sacred and usually brought them home to be used for recreation. For such substances that are common today such as coffee and tobacco were strictly prohibited and in most cases enforced with harsh punishment.

The Comprehensive Crime Control Act Of 1984

In 1984, Congress passed the Controlled Substance Act in different ways which included scheduling of certain drugs for government earning of profit as derived from criminals and temporary placing them in Schedule 1 of the Controlled Substance Act without any of procedural requirement (Rein Arman, 1997). By that time a new threat was emerging in the form of Crack cocaine. Images of street violence and the growing menace of the new disease AIDS created fear across all the states. In 1986, a basketball star, Len Bias passed away from a suspected drug overdose, and the cocaine menace became news on all media channels.

The Anti-Drug Abuse Act Of 1986

President Ronald Reagan signed the Anti-drug Abuse Act in 1986. This helped the federal government to intensify its campaign against drugs and impose strict penalties for any violation of drug laws . Passed with a unanimous vote by Congress, the Act instituted a minimum of 5 to 10 years in jail and also a possible capital punishment for some of the drug offenses.

Drug Laws In The Twenty-First Century

Back in 2000, the Supreme Court ruled that the use of tobacco cannot be controlled as a drug by the federal government. The safety of the drug was improved by America's Pharmaceuticals for Children Act of 2001. The Drug Safety Board of America was created in 2005. Its main objective is to advise the FDA on issues concerning drug safety. In 2012 `Colorado and Washington passed new amendments allowing the sale and consumption of marijuana.

Drug Treatment

To treat drug use, Medical treatment can be used; there are various treatments available for dealing with drug and alcohol abuse. The can be utilized for the restoration of the normal functions of the

brain and to prevent the rapid deterioration of the brain. There are treatment measures for various drug use, such as morphine, alcohol addiction, and tobacco use. People with severe addictions abuse more than one drug and will require comprehensive treatment for the drugs they might be abusing. Methadone and naltrexone are some of the effective treatments for opiate addiction. Acting in the same area of the brain as heroin, methadone suppresses and reduces cravings. These treatments prevent patients from seeking drugs or engaging in various criminal activities to afford their drugs of choice, therefore allowing the patient to receive behavioral treatment.

Three treatment measures can be used to treat alcohol abuse. These are disulfiram, acamprosate, and naltrexone. Naltrexone is used to block opioid receptors involved in the rewarding effect of taking more alcohol. It also reduces the chances of relapsing to heavy drinking and is one of the most effective measures for most patients with alcohol addiction. Acamprosate, on the other hand, is used to reduce signs of withdrawal, such as insomnia, anxiety, or uncomfortable emotional feelings. Acamprosate is often used for individuals with severe addiction. Disulfiram is used to inhibit the degradation of alcohol in the body, resulting in the alcohol user vomiting, trembling, or making the skin of the alcohol user turn red.

According to Anthony (1995), studies of brain imaging of addicted persons show actual changes in the areas of the brain responsible for judgment, making critical decisions, learning, and control of behavior. These are some of the reasons why it is believed that these changes the proper function of the brain and might help in explaining the compulsive behavior that goes along with addiction. Drugs such as alcohol contain chemicals that usually tap into the communication system of the brain and disrupt the proper function of the nervous system. There are at least two ways that disruption of the brain occurs: by copying the natural chemical messengers of the brain and by overstimulating the brain's reward system.

Conclusion

While the choice of taking drugs is voluntary for every individual, the brain changes gradually; the changes turn and challenge the ability of the user's self-control as well as the ability to resist the further use of the drug. This is the reason why drug addiction is categorized as a brain disorder. Drug abuse changes the structure of the brain and the way it functions. The changes can last for a very long time and result in harmful behavior among the individuals abusing the drug. Due to brain changes, quitting is often a difficult process for the user. Moreover, addiction can affect any person despite strong individual character, and once this takes effect, frequent use changes the delicate and complex brain system. Behavioral therapy can be used to help drug users learn the various ways of managing drug use and a healthy life free from drugs. However, treatment is the only way of mitigating drug abuse, irrespective of whether one chooses to become a drug addict or a disease. If society ever wishes to make any progress in dealing with the drug menace, it is essential to inspire positive moral growth, especially for the addicts.

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