



## Alcohol and Drug Abuse - A Global Trend What Parents Should Know

VP Gupta<sup>1</sup> and AH Shah<sup>2\*</sup><sup>1</sup>Forensic Medicine Department, Nepalese Army Institute of Medical Sciences, Kathmandu, Nepal<sup>2</sup>Public Health Department, Faculty of Health Science and Wellbeing, Akamai University, Hilo, Hawaii, USA**\*Corresponding Author:** AH Shah, Public Health Department, Faculty of Health Science and Wellbeing, Akamai University, Hilo, Hawaii, USA.**Received:** March 29, 2018; **Published:** May 11, 2018**Abstract**

In the fast-changing world, old beliefs are being questioned and unluckily new values have not yet taken firm roots. Parents find the society around them drastically different from that of their own young age. Children today are exposed to varied types of influences including drug products having positive growth promoting activity while several other medicines and chemicals which might be harmful and malevolent. In such a society parent have still a big role to play.

Parents need to learn about the environmental pressures and stresses that their children face. There is an urgent need to find a procedure which can help parents to successfully identify that their child is in drug habituation or addiction.

The current literature review clearly demonstrated that use and abuse of alcohol and illicit drugs is a growing menace globally among adolescents. In such an alarming condition every parent has to fight and react back properly in order to keep their children out of the mal practices, influences and certain traditions. To protect their children from harmful effects of such substances, parents need to know about the effect of alcohol and drug abuse. The parents must be aware of the factors which promote the use and abuse of different chemicals. Furthermore, there is a constant need to learn methods to prevent such eventualities.

Our current literature survey indicated that worldwide many scientific journals are now published to highlight different scientific judgments and prevention methods regarding the toxicity of alcohol and other drugs of abuse. A great deal of help is provided to the suffering parents by research reports and data published in widely distributed journals. Among the developing countries including Nepal, efforts are being made to improve health sector facilities. However, alcohol and illicit drugs remained one of the issues sometimes associated with increasing tourism.

**Keywords:** Drugs; Drug dependence; Craving; Hangover; Euphoria; Tolerance

**Introduction**

To say as some doctors, do, that alcohol/drug abuse is a 'social problem' which is rather naïve and simplistic view point. Similarly, some laymen conceptualize the doctor's role or involvement as "medicalising the problem". The various problems related to alcohol and drug abuse are neither social nor solely medical ones, hence, a lot more is needed to be done [1,2].

Doctors both in urban and rural areas regularly encounter patients who are abusing or are dependent on alcohol and/or any illicit drugs. Such patients come in contact with the doctor because of variety of reasons such as physical complications due to alcohol abuse, withdrawal symptoms resulting from alcohol/drug dependence and occasionally, secondary to psychiatric disorders brought in by such abuse. Medical doctor has a great opportunity to help such people by using effective therapists in view of the close relationship that they enjoy with their patients and families [3-5].

These days one hears so much about young people getting addicted to alcohol and illicit drugs. Newspapers, radio and television programmers feature the problem of alcohol/drug abuse in great detail. Health authorities warn the public about this menace. Nepal is not an exception, rather there is increasing trend of alcohol dependence and other drug abuse issues [1,6,7]. In a study, among young medical college students the most common sources of stress were related to academic pressure and psychosocial concerns [8].

Social and religious leaders talk about how such indulgence is deteriorating family relations. It is not uncommon to come across a relative or a friend who is addicted to alcohol or drugs. When parents hear about someone having a problem with alcohol/ drugs, their immediate reaction will be: It can't happen to our children. They are good; or only the children of the rich indulge in such habits or it is a problem of the west. However, alcohol and drug abuse are on increasing trends, from one to the other end of the world causing a number of deaths. The role of family members and clinicians has been found crucial in such a situation [9,10].

In Nepal, alcohol is well tolerated, and its misuse is not taken seriously because it is used by officials and government employees in different parties and celebrations. This slackness resulted in increased production, sale, and alcohol drinking in Nepalese culture. Cannabis and opium use comes at the second position. In the urban areas heroin use is at increase which led the Governmental intervention in 1960, however, no reduction could be achieved. Regrettably, the relapse rate following detoxification treatment is quite high and warrants more investigations on the nature, behavior and response of Nepalese population [6,10].

It is worth mentioning that some parents do not take the situation seriously as a parent and start trying to ignore, then he is warned. Alcohol and drug addiction is much more common than one may like to believe. Rich, poor, religious, atheist, intelligent, dull, the elite, the slum dwellers-all sorts of people, have been vic-

tims of addiction worldwide. Several scientific reports are associated to deaths caused by high alcohol use along with other illicit drugs and tobacco in different countries [11]. It is around us and public awareness campaign is always needed regarding this growing menace. It is better for parents to realize the seriousness of the situation than to avoid facing the issue [2,6]. In continuation of our work on the toxicity of different illicit drugs [12,13] and deleterious effects of alcohol [14], in this communication we wish to present further updates, hopes and suggestions for the parents to save the life of their younger ones.

Methods and Materials

To understand this, menace a hectic literature search was done. Almost 150 publications were reviewed and then this short communication could be prepared. The focus was put on: What parents should know and how they can identify that their child is in drug habituation or addiction.

In the light of current literature survey regarding drug abuse, the following factors are discussed point wise in detail: Some facts about drug use; when parents should suspect that child is on drugs; what parents should do if the child is on drugs/ alcohol? How parents can prevent?

Results and Discussion

Society around us has changed so much that parents cannot take for granted that their children are following the social codes that governed their lives. All around so many pubs and bars have been opened where all sorts of unwarranted activities go on. Children start frequenting these pubs and bars either out of curiosity or as a fad. They start with beer and gradually shift to hard liquor. They start as ‘occasionally’ but such ‘occasions’ come regularly. It is well documented that age of 23.8 years was the mean of drug abusers age and they were mostly males, with majority of them un-employed or students [15]. Cannabis (ganja) and alcohol were traditionally used in Nepal for centuries. Generally, the following drugs were used: alcohol, cannabis, Nicotine tabacum, codeine-containing cough syrups, nitrazepam tablets, buprenorphine injections and heroin smoking. The drugs were obtained by local pharmacies, drug user friends, cross-border supplies [15,16].

Some facts about drug use

- It is increasing with alarming pace.
- Alcohol and cannabis are most commonly used drugs.
- Cannabis is the ‘gateway’ drug and then they switch over to harder drugs.
- Users are of the age group of 17 - 25 years.
- Alcohol, tobacco and drugs are more commonly used by males.
- Drug addiction problem is with both educated as well as uneducated classes.
- Incidence of drug abuse is higher among the unemployed.

When parents should suspect that child is on drugs

It is always good that parents have a good communication with their children and should build up trust so that children feel free to discuss their problems. Such cases are always secretive and may hide from their parents.

Parents, if they have any doubt, can look for some simple signs:

1. Sudden and unexplained changes in mood and behaviors.
2. Loss of appetite.
3. Loss of interest in regular activities and hobbies.
4. Significant drop in school grades and attendance.

5. Withdrawal from family.
6. Sloppiness about personal appearance.
7. Weight loss.
8. Hypersensitive to parental remarks.
9. Unusual secretiveness about movements, friends circle and whereabouts.
10. Lowering of energy and drive.
11. Slurred speech and confused memory.
12. Poor short-term memory.
13. Lying, cheating and stealing.
14. Preference for solitude.
15. Presence of alcohol bottles, needles, packets and strange looking articles.
16. Demand for money for no sound reasons.

What parents should do if the child is on drugs/alcohol

1. Get professional Help.
2. Identify and remove source of supply of drugs.
3. Identify and remove the child from peer group.
4. Help the child to make friend and develop new hobbies.
5. Monitor the progress of the child in treatment process.
6. Need to learn to communicate with your child and understand the need and feelings.
7. Examine and change your life style if needed. Alcoholic parents are poor role model for children.
8. Support your child in the fight against drugs by being as-assertive yet sympathetic.
9. Provide alternatives to drugs like sports, arts, pets, gardening, etc.
10. Build a support group of family, friends, relatives and voluntary groups.

How parents can prevent

1. Begin drug education as early as possible.
2. Use every opportunity to drive home the negative effects of drugs.
3. Know where your children are at all times and who they are with.
4. Avoid all parties, hikes or camps that are not supervised by responsible adults.
5. Encourage youngsters to ask questions and clarify doubts.
6. Keep open the channels of communication with your child.
7. Share with the child as many activities as possible.
8. Encourage different hobbies and interest in child.
9. Monitor and guide their friendships
10. Respect their individuality.
11. Make them feel responsible for their life by permitting them to make informed decision about matters that affect them.
12. Plan and demand responsibility.
13. Do not dismiss the drug problem as ‘generation gap’.
14. Make it clear to them that drugs may provide temporary solution but do not solve any of life’s problem.
15. Understand their stresses and problems.
16. Encourage discussions in the family.

- 17. Do not be authoritarian. ‘Control without caring’ leads to rebellion.
- 18. Make it practice spending time together in family. Sharing family activities brings the members closer.
- 19. Build up a harmonious atmosphere in the family. Family should be a haven for children to turn to, not something to run away from.
- 20. Be a good role model.

Conclusion

Positive parenting is all about caring, sharing and communication. As long as children know the ground rule of family, the importance of family values and that their parents do care about them, and family shares its ups and downs, they continue to be part of the family and do not get alienated from it, no matter how old they grow. Do not lose heart; parenting is a tough task for which most of us are least prepared.

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