



Profile of Substance Use Patients at State Mental Health Hospital

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Abstract

Aim: The aim of the study was to study the clinical and sociodemographic profile of substance use patients seeking treatment at State Mental Health Hospital.

Material and Methods: It was a cross-sectional observation conducted from February 2021 to March 2021. Seventy consecutive treatment-seeking patients for substance use providing informed consent were included in the study.

Results: 70 substance use patients attending OPD were included in study majority of which were males. Around 78% participants had family history of substance use. Mean age of sample came out to be 25.71 (SD±4.16) years. Majority of patients started substance use between 21 to 30 years. Most common substance used was opioid (84.3%) followed by tobacco (78.6%). Peer pressure (44.3%) has been reported as most common reason for initiation substance use.

Conclusion: It is suggestive that substance use is initiated in teenage which is most commonly due to peer pressure. So, young people are more vulnerable to get indulged in substance use and policies to prevent and address this should be in place precisely during teenage years.

Keywords: Himachal Hospital of Mental Health and Rehabilitation (HHMH&R).

Introduction

Around 5% of total population of India is suffering from substance use disorders as reported in National Mental Health Survey (2015–2016)¹. As per survey done in 2019 considerable number of people abuse psychoactive substances in our country, and it is prevalent among all subgroups of population². During recent years opioid use has turned out to be most prevalent among various mental health disorders, but very few have studied substance use patients' profile in north India. In recent decade there is major changes in practices of drug abuse in Himachal Pradesh, there is rise in

illicit opioid use via chasing as well as intravenous use along with stimulants and heavy cannabis use whereas earlier alcohol was main substance of abuse. Appropriate assessment of these trends of substance use, especially illicit drugs such as opioids and stimulants, has become important to control this upcoming crisis.

Materials and Methods

It was a cross sectional observation done at OPD facility of State Mental Health Hospital, Shimla. The duration of the study was from February 2021 to March 2021. Seventy treatment-seeking

patients, Diagnosed according to the International Classification of Diseases version 10 were involved after informed consent. A semi-structured interview was done to elicit sociodemographic and clinical details of participants. Analysis of data collected was done by SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences).

Results

All the participants were male and mean age was 25.71 (SD±4.16) years. Significant proportion of participants (44%) were graduate and 47% were skilled professionals. Most of participants were single (80%) & 78% had family history of substance use. Above information is provided in Table 1. In Table 2(A) it is evident that majority of participants (55.7%) started substance use

between 21-30 years of age. The duration of substance use was more than 24 months in around 63% of participants. Most of participants were poly-substance users in which illicit opioids were most common used substance (84.3%) followed by tobacco (78.6%). Reasons provided for initiation and continuing of substance use are provided in Table 2(B). 44.3% participants reported peer pressure as reason for initiating substance followed by curiosity (32.9%). Experiencing withdrawal was most common reason (41.4%) for continuing substance use followed by enjoyment and re-experiencing pleasurable effect (27.1%). In reasons to visit our center difficulty in procuring substance was most common (31%) followed by continuous craving and withdrawal (24.3%).

Table 1:- Sociodemographic characteristics.

Socio-demographic variables	N=70 Mean (SD)/ Frequency (%)
Age (in years)	25.71 (4.16)
Educational status	
High school	13 (18.6%)
Intermediate or post high school diploma	26 (37.1%)
Graduate or Postgraduate	31 (44.3%)
Occupational status	
Student	09 (12.9%)
Unemployed	18 (25.7%)
Skilled/Semi-skilled worker	28 (47.1%)
Clerical/Shop owner/Farmer	09 (12.9%)
Professional/Semi-professional	06 (8.6%)
Marital Status	
Single	56 (80%)
Married	14 (21%)
Substance use in family	
Yes	65 (78.5%)
No	15 (21.5%)

Table 2(A): - Substance use characteristics.

Characteristics	N=70 Mean (SD)/ Frequency (%)
Age at which initiated (yrs.)	
<=20	28 (40%)
21-30	39 (55.7%)
31-40	03 (4.2%)
Duration of substance use (months)	
<=6	03 (4.3%)
6-12	09 (12.9%)
12-24	14 (20%)
>24	44 (62.9%)
Type of substance used	
Opioid	59 (84.3%)
Alcohol	34 (48.6%)
Cannabis	30 (42.8%)
Tobacco	55 (78.6%)

Table 2(A): Substance use characteristics

Characteristics	N=70 Mean (SD)/ Frequency (%)
Reasons for initiating substance use	
Peer pressure	31 (44.3%)
Curiosity	23 (32.9%)
Family and work-related stress	14 (18.5%)
Academic related stress	03 (4.3%)
Reason for continuing substance use	
Enjoyment and re-experiencing	19 (27.1%)
Experiencing withdrawal	29 (41.4%)
Easy accessibility	11 (15.7%)
Family or work-related stress	11 (15.7%)
Reasons to visit our centre	
Continuous craving and withdrawal	17 (24.3%)
Problems in family or work	12 (17.1%)
Difficulty in procuring	22 (31%)
Medical issues	09 (12.9%)
Made to visit by family members	10 (14.3%)

Discussion

As a developing country our country is encountering multiple epidemics at one end there are infectious diseases and life style related diseases on the other. Mental health issues including substance use are other challenges which has to be dealt with. Overall substance use starts at early age which is documented. Majority of participants in our study started substance use in age between 21 to 30 years which is in accordance with existing literature³⁻⁵.

Most participants were male which is consistent with literature⁶⁻⁸ in which it is seen that substance users are more likely to be male. The less females at the de-addiction facilities can be due to the stigma and embarrassment linked with substance use, kept aside the male predominance of male in substance use⁹.

In our study participants were predominantly graduate or post-graduate (44.3%), followed by intermediate or post high school diploma (37.1%), which are almost in accordance with existing literature^{7,9}. Most of the participants were single and majority have family history of mental illness⁷.

Most common used substance in our study was illicit opioids in various forms (84.3%), followed by tobacco (78.6%) which is consistent with

existing literature^{3,7,9}. The main reasons reported behind initiating substance use were peer pressure (44.3%) followed by curiosity(32.9%). Peer pressure has also been mentioned as a major initiating factor in previous studies too^{3,7}.

Majority of substance users reported experiencing withdrawal (41.4%) as most common reason for regular use followed by enjoyment and re-experiencing the effect (27%). Majority reported difficulty in procuring substance (31%) that continuous craving and withdrawal (24.3%) as reasons to visit our facility. These are also in accordance with the literature¹⁰.

Conclusions

There are no major studies done in our state to reflect the prevalence of substance use and also no guideline-based steps are taken to combat the current situation. Our study highlights the overall change in pattern of substance use and also the burden which will help to design policies and protocols and emphasize on need for development of dedicated de-addiction centres at district levels to effectively deal with this epidemic and also encourage for further more methodologically robust studies at community level.

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