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Independent Study and Mentorship

Spiece 2A

Research Assessment

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Assessment:

Throughout my ISM journey, I have made a majority of my research focused on drug abuse. My research has differentiated between the causes as to why a person feels compelled to abuse drugs, whether it be peer pressure, personal problems, or the experience of being separate from reality. I also have looked into specific statistics as to how different types of drugs affect individuals and what the national averages are for those facts. For example, in this article and according to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 10.2% of the American population over the age of 12 was involved in using illicit drugs in 2014. This statistic surprised me because in my own drug abuse survey about 50% of participants knew someone in their life that abused drugs. There is a large difference between the people who abuse drugs in my community and the national average. Therefore, with this knowledge about the abuse of drugs and my upcoming plans for my final product, I wanted to investigate into the difference into drug abuse against addiction and how easy it is to become addicted from substance abuse. That is why I want to

make a educational video concerning abuse that targets middle school students in order to prevent them from ever even beginning to abuse drugs.

Drug addiction is defined as the compulsive use of a substance when a person is past the ability to control the addiction. Their needs are centered on making their life revolve around the substance use and puts the abuse at the top of their priority list above everything else. Drug abuse is the negative use of prescription or recreational drugs that can eventually, and often does, spiral into addiction. Abuse is considered a leading cause that can motivate one towards becoming addicted. This differentiation is something that I will be able to apply into my developing understanding of this broad topic that I can incorporate into my product.

It was also interesting to see the drugs that are associated with peer pressure. I interpret these "club drugs" to mean that because everyone else is doing it, it must be considered "cool," so more participate in this abuse. Gamma Hydroxybutyrate, Rohypnol, and Ketamine are examples of these types of club drugs- many have a common theme of being used by abusers to harm others. These kinds of abusers go down the wrong pathway leads to the belief of not being able to change and try to drag others down to the same pathway. As these "club drugs" are used to get a sense of euphoria, impair memory, and lead to making risky decisions, they are dangerous to the individual and to the community.

Therefore, with the knowledge that I have gained from this article, I can use both the statistics and general understanding in order to create my final product. The more that I know about drug abuse, the more I can benefit my audience and help them gain a deeper understanding of this problem that grows everyday. I can now direct my research of learning how to create an

effective educational video by seeing the best way to present factual information in an interesting and entertaining way.

Drug Abuse Symptoms, Facts, and Statistics

Edited By Maria Gifford, B.A. Reviewed By Leah Miller, M.A.

Drug abuse is a major problem in the United States. One of the most significant issues concerning drug abuse is the high risk for developing an addiction. The abuse of drugs can have serious ramifications on a person's physical health, mental health, and overall well-being.

Drug Abuse vs. Drug Addiction

Diagnosed clinically as a substance use disorder, addiction is a recognized condition involving compulsive use of a substance despite negative consequences. Drug abuse is the inappropriate use of substances – including alcohol, prescription medication, or illegal drugs – for purposes such as pleasure, to feel or perform better in certain situations, or to change one's perception of reality.

Abusing substances creates both changes in behavior and in the way the brain works, specifically in the areas governing judgment and reward. Continued abuse of substances can be a warning sign that an individual is beginning to lose control over their drug use.

Drug Abuse Facts

Drug abuse not only affects the individual, but also can have far-reaching consequences that affect family, employment, personal health, health care systems, local communities, and society as a whole. The following examples

illustrate the potentially profound impact of substance abuse at an individual and societal level, including the toll it may take on health and family.

- Misuse of alcohol and illicit drugs affects society through costs incurred secondary to crime, reduced productivity at work, and health care expenses.
- The overall costs of alcohol abuse amount to \$224 billion annually, with the costs to the health care system accounting for approximately \$25 billion.
- Substance abuse costs the health care system about \$11 billion, with overall costs reaching \$193 billion.
- Substance abuse and addiction also affects other areas, such as broken families, destroyed careers, death due to negligence or accident, domestic violence, physical abuse, and child abuse.
- **Drug abuse and addiction** changes your brain chemistry. The longer you use your drug of choice, the more damage is done – and the harder it is to go back to “normal” during drug rehab.
- Drug abuse and addiction is a chronic, relapsing, compulsive disorder that often requires formal treatment, and may call for multiple courses of treatment.

Substance use disorders are treatable. Effective treatment can be found from a comprehensive **rehabilitation program** that is tailored to meet your specific needs. For assistance in finding a treatment facility that meets your needs, please contact our helpline at **1-888-744-0789**.

Drug Abuse Statistics

A number of different government agencies take annual surveys to monitor the ups and downs of substance abuse and addiction in the United States. Some findings include:

- According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), approximately 27 million Americans, or 10.2% of the American population over the age of 12 reported using illicit drugs in 2014.
- The NSDUH also estimated that about 28.7 million people or 10.9% of the population over 12 drove while intoxicated at least once in 2013.
- An estimated 6.5 million Americans over the age of 12 reported current, non-medical use of prescription drugs, such as painkillers, tranquilizers, stimulants, and sedatives.
- Estimates showed that in 2014, nearly 140 million Americans over the age of 12 were, at the time, currently using alcohol, with 16.3 million having reported heavy alcohol use in the prior month, and 60.9 million having reported binge drinking in the prior month, reflecting an increase from previous years.
- NSDUH reports that cocaine use declined among Americans over the age of 12 – from about 2.3 million people in 2003 to approximately 1.5 million people in 2014.
- In 2014, 21.5 million Americans aged 12 or older met the criteria for a substance use disorder (or addiction) in the previous year.
- In 2013, 22.7 million Americans needed treatment for a substance use disorder – almost 9% of the population over the age of 12. Only about 2.5 million received such treatment at a specialty facility. It is estimated that more than 41% of treatment admissions were for alcohol abuse, 20% of admissions were for opiate addiction treatment, and 17% were for the treatment of marijuana abuse in 2009.

Drug-Related Emergency Room Visits

The [Drug Abuse Warning Network](#) (DAWN) reports on the number of drug-related emergency room (ER) visits that happen in different areas of the country each year. According to DAWN:

- Nearly 4.6 million ER visits in the United States were related in some way to drugs in 2009.

- About half of those visits were caused by reactions to medications that were taken according to a doctor's prescription and **45%, or 2.1 million ER visits were related to the abuse of illicit substances.**
- Of the 2.1 million ER visits caused by drug abuse, more than 27% were caused by the non-medical abuse of prescription drugs, OTC medications, and supplements. More than 21% were caused by illicit drugs and over 14% involved alcohol in combination with other illicit substances.
- Between 2004 and 2009, drug-related ER visits increased 81% from 2.5 million to 4.6 million.
- ER visits caused by non-medical use of prescription drugs increased more than 98% between 2004 and 2009.

Are you ready to find a drug rehab that can help you or someone you care about avoid becoming a statistic? Call [1-888-744-0789](tel:1-888-744-0789) now for help finding treatment.

Symptoms of Drug Abuse

Depending upon your drug of choice, the symptoms that suggest the presence of an addiction that requires treatment will vary. Different classes of drugs have different telltale signs that signify usage.

In general, however, there are a number of signs that drug abuse or [alcohol abuse](#) is a serious problem. If you recognize some or all of the following things happening to someone you care about, or happening in your own life, drug abuse may be an issue that needs to be addressed in treatment:

- Isolating from family and friends who don't use drugs
- Spending time with new friends or friends who get high or drink
- Never having money or often asking to borrow money, even for small items
- Showing up late to work/school or not showing up at all
- Losing a job

- Doing little to find a job if out of work
- Paying less attention to basic hygiene
- Changes in sleeping habits
- Extremely private about possessions, including their bag, room, or car
- Lying about using or drinking
- Sneaking away to get high or drunk

You may find hidden bottles of alcohol or drug paraphernalia among your loved one's belongings. Personality changes often occur with substance abuse and addiction. You or your loved one may be more irritable or agitated, and even blow off commitments or family events.

Drug Abuse in Teens and Young Adults

The earlier in one's life that drug abuse begins, the more likely an individual will be to become addicted. Substance use in teens and young adults can become part of a pattern of unsafe behaviors, including unsafe sex and driving under the influence. Due to availability, teens and young adults may be more likely to abuse dangerous "club drugs" which, as part of the general picture of alcohol and drugs being abused by this demographic, can lead to serious problems including:

- Addiction
- Poor judgment.
- Impaired memory.
- Injury due to intoxication.
- Lifelong legal problems.
- Development of mental health issues.
- Serious, irreversible physical health problems, such as HIV, Hepatitis C, or damage to major organs.
- Overdose or death.

Popular Club Drugs

Club drugs are prevalent in many venues where young people prefer to spend their time, such as parties, concerts, or raves. Older teens and adults can get access to these same drugs in clubs and bars on a regular basis.

Gamma Hydroxybutyrate (GHB)

Gamma hydroxybutyric acid (GHB) has a high potential for abuse and no recognized medical use in the United States. This drug is a central nervous system depressant.

GHB imitates the GABA neurotransmitter in the human brain. GABA works by regulating consciousness, activity, and sleep, as well as improving mood and promoting a feeling of relaxation. When GHB is taken, it can create feelings of euphoria, drowsiness, reduced anxiety, confusion, and memory impairment. These effects can lead to GHB used as a “date rape” drug, since the individual may not have any recollection of the event. Combining GHB with other drugs or alcohol can lead to breathing difficulties and overdose. Continued abuse of GHB can result in coma, seizures and even death.

Rohypnol

A second central nervous system depressant popular among young people is a benzodiazepine called Rohypnol. Like GHB, Rohypnol can decrease inhibitions, impair memory and coordination, and create a feeling of euphoria. Rohypnol is often used to sedate and incapacitate a victim of sexual attack, leaving them with no memory of the attack. Continued abuse of Rohypnol can lead to addiction.

Ketamine

Ketamine is an anesthetic with dissociative properties, which some users find enjoyable. Ketamine can lead to feelings of euphoria, hallucinations, distorted perception of sight and sound, disconnection, and loss of control.

Taking even small amounts of ketamine can result in significantly dangerous symptoms, including difficulties with cognition and focus, and becoming unresponsive to stimuli. Moderate use generally produces hallucinations and a dreamy euphoria. Higher doses may cause the individual to suffer from amnesia or become delirious. With any level of abuse, memory can be negatively affected.

Drug Consumption and Drug Addiction

Diagnosis of a substance use disorder requires that two or more of the symptoms frequently associated with problematic substance use occur simultaneously within a 12-month period of time. These symptoms include:

- Tolerance for the drugs they consume.
- Withdrawal symptoms when the drugs are not consumed.
- Loss of control when using drugs.
- Inability to stop using.
- Strong cravings or urges to use.
- Inability to perform duties within the family, at work, or at school.

Scaling back on drug use behavior is, for many addicted individuals, extremely difficult. Even if successful, simply taking less or “cutting back” on the substance use will not solve these problems. For instance, merely **cutting back on certain types of drug use will not eliminate or reduce the risk of permanent brain damage or disease of the vital organs.**

Even those who occasionally abuse drugs might suffer from one or more of the aforementioned symptoms. For instance, loss of control when using drugs may constitute a drug user’s inability to choose their responsibilities for work,

school or children over their drug use. The drug abuser may have little ability to control their decision to obtain drugs and use, rather than helping their child with homework or going to work to support their family.

Periodic drug abuse can have consequences that rival those seen in cases of full-blown addiction, depending upon the individual and the circumstances.

Prescription Drug Abuse

Prescription drugs are becoming abused more commonly. Even when intended for valid medical or psychological issues, prescription drugs can be abused should they be taken differently than prescribed or taken by other individuals. Opioid painkillers can be prescribed for the treatment of pain due to an injury or chronic condition. The central nervous system depressants known as benzodiazepines are often prescribed for anxiety. Individuals who suffer from attention-deficit disorder, narcolepsy, or obesity may have received prescriptions for stimulant medications that have mechanisms of action similar to that of cocaine and methamphetamine.

In some cases, the pleasurable effects of these drugs (the euphoria that drug abusers seek) are only temporary. As the patient develops a tolerance to the drugs, the desired effects lessen and the euphoria goes away. Some individuals may assume that the drugs are no longer working, so they increase their dosage so they can feel the effects.

This developing of tolerance is often the first in a series of steps that can lead to addiction. Strictly speaking, the very first time an individual takes more than their prescribed dose or takes prescribed doses too closely together, they have already begun to abuse the medication.

States are beginning to more closely monitor doctors who prescribe certain drugs to ensure they are not being overly prescribed. This technique has led to

reduced drug abuse in some communities according to the FDA. It has also increased the likelihood for some individuals to seek these drugs on the street.

Heroin Abuse

A functional individual who maintains a job and makes the “right” decisions about career and family may still have a problem with the abuse of drugs like heroin. Heroin is an opiate that interacts with opioid receptors throughout the brain. In addition to a marked analgesic effect, these opioid receptors can change the way the drug user feels and create a dream-like state of **euphoria**. **The more heroin an individual uses, the more intense this feeling**. A person **might abuse heroin once in a lifetime or once each year**, but the risks of overdose or life-long repercussions are still prevalent. The risk of developing a dependence upon heroin is increased every time an individual uses the drug.

As tolerance develops, the heroin abuser will need to use more of the drug to achieve these intense feelings, or the “high” associated with drug abuse. Someone who abuses heroin may take just enough of the drug to keep the withdrawal symptoms away, and allow them to maintain their level of daily functioning. This will make them “well” enough to go to work or school. Though their compulsive drug use may go undetected by those around them, these individuals continue to subject their bodies to the cumulative ravages of heroin abuse, and they may easily meet the diagnostic criteria of an opioid use disorder.

Unseen Dangers of Drug Abuse

Drug abuse can obviously lead to **health problems** involving the liver and other major organs. However, there are other dangers that can come from the abuse of drugs or alcohol that many individuals do not consider. For instance, drug abuse can lead an individual to make **risky decisions** that place them into

dangerous situations, along with those around them. These decisions can have lasting impacts on a variety of situations.

An individual who abuses substances by injecting directly into muscle tissue or veins drastically increases their risk of infection, and sharing needles can easily transmit HIV/AIDS and chronic hepatitis viruses. Substances often impair judgment and decision-making, leading users to make unsafe choices.

When an individual is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, they may be more likely to underestimate the effects of the substance on reaction time and judgment, leading them to drive under the influence. In the United States, 29.1 million people admitted to driving under the influence of alcohol in 2012. In 2012, almost 10 million Americans over the age of 12 admitted to driving under the influence of illicit drugs in the last year.

Drug Abuse and Brain Damage

Brain damage is a significant risk of drug abuse. The use of cocaine can cause strokes so small they often go unnoticed, but result in brain tissue death, and the gradual accumulation of neurologic deficits nonetheless. MDMA (Ecstasy) can disrupt the brain's ability to normally produce serotonin, a chemical responsible for equalizing mood, aggression and other emotions. This can lead users to being unable to control or experience normal emotions without the use of the drug.

Some drug users will engage in reckless activities such as binge use of certain drugs or alcohol. When this happens, even if the individual does not meet the diagnostic criteria for a substance use disorder, the activity may result in irreversible brain lesions – for example, those sustained as a result of major head trauma – that can render the individual permanently brain damaged and ultimately disabled.

Damage to the brain can also manifest as psychological. Drug abuse can lead to anxiety and depression, and in some cases, can worsen pre-existing psychotic symptoms. The chemical changes in the brain can lead users to experience an inability to enjoy life without drugs and their euphoric effects.

When an individual begins to abuse drugs, they may find that their lives outside of their drug use are affected. They may be unable to perform as well at their jobs, which can lead to financial struggles. They may relate differently to their families, which can lead to strained relationships and the destruction of existing families. Factors such as these, or legal troubles, can contribute to anxiety, depression and other mental health conditions. These conditions may often contribute to more drug abuse, which can culminate in serious addiction.