CHANGING PATTERN OF DRUG ABUSE AMONG PATIENTS ATTENDING DE-ADDICTION CENTRE AT FARIDKOT

JASWANT SINGH SACHDEV, RANVIR SINGH YAKHMI & AJAY KUMAR SHARMA

ABSTRACT

Prevalence and pattern of drug abuse among patients attending de-addiction centre of GGS Medical College and Hospital Faridkot in the year 1994 were analysed and compared with pattern of drug abuse among the patients attending the same centre in 1998. It was observed that there was an increase in the patients using the drugs available over the counter with chemists. It was also found that there was a decrease in the number of patients using raw opium in the year 1998 as compared to the year 1994.

Key Words: Abuse pattern, opium, over the counter

As long as history has been recorded traditional drugs like opium, cannabis, alcohol etc have been used in many countries, but the amount of drug taken was less and it was more or less socially accepted. In a survey done in 1986 in rural areas of Faridkot, it was found that about 1.5% population were addicts (Sachdev et al., 1986). Majority of the drugs used were alcohol, opium, barbiturates and methaqualone. In another survey done in 1989 again in rural areas of Faridkot number of addicts has risen to 9% whereas the drugs used were alcohol (25%) opium (23.2%) and tobacco (8.86%). Use of barbiturates and methaqualone had dropped (Sachdev et al., 1989).

In the recent past certain disturbing trends have been observed. The abuse of traditionally used drugs like opium is being replaced by over the counter drugs like other opiates, injections like pentazocine, morphine combination of injections like pentazocine, diazepam and promethazine, codeine containing cough syrups and preparations containing dextropropoxyphene diphenoxylate, buprenorphine and benzodiazepine. The most disturbing trend is that the school and college going children have started using these drugs and the age old social control measures have become ineffective.

Keeping these emerging trends in mind it was decided to compare the pattern of drug abuse in the counseling centre in patients attending the centre at G.G.S. Medical College, Faridkot in 1994 with that in 1998.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

Records of all addicts attending the deaddiction counseling centre in 1994 were analysed regarding their socio demographic variable and patterns of drug abuse and these were compared with those in the year 1998.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The findings of study do not show much change in the socio-demographic variable in 1994
and 1998. In both studies majority of addicts are from rural background, farmer by occupation and illiterate or educated upto primary level.

Table 1 shows the nature of primary drug abused by the addicts. Here we found the changing pattern in the two groups. Whereas the abuse of opium has deceased from 14.71% in 1994 to 8.52% in 1998 (almost half), the abuse of poppy husk has increased from 13.50% in 1994 to 34.36% in 1998 (More than double). There is also a significant change in the abuse of drugs available over the counter with chemists like dextropropoxyphene, diphenoxylate, codeine phosphate etc. Their abuse has increased from 11.08% in 1994 to 28.25% in 1998. Number of addicts using the injectable drugs is less because majority of them do not take treatment as O.P.D. Patients.

| TABLE 1 |
| SUBSTANCE USERS ACCORDING TO PRIMARY DRUG OF ABUSE |
|          | 1994 | 1998 |
|          | N (%)| N (%) |
| Opium    | 73(14.71) | 38(8.52) |
| Bhukki(Poppy husk) | 67(13.50) | 153(34.36) |
| Dextropropoxyphene/ | 55(11.08) | 126(28.25) |
| Diphenoxylate | 42(8.46) | 19(4.26) |
| Injections(Morphine/ | 163(32.80) | 65(14.57) |
| Pentazocine) | 73(14.71) | 35(7.84) |
| Alcohol   | 163(32.80) | 65(14.57) |
| Tobacco   | 163(32.80) | 65(14.57) |
| Two drugs | 163(32.80) | 65(14.57) |
| More than two Drugs | 5(1.00) | 4(0.89) |

From the results given above it is seen that the number of addicts abusing opium has decreased, while the number of addicts using poppy husk has increased. Likewise more addicts have started abusing drugs like dextropropoxyphene, diphenoxylate, codeine phosphate etc. It was observed that in a day addicts were consuming 20-30 capsules of desetroposeyphene upto 200 tablets of diphenoxylate and upto 10 ampoules of injection buprenorphine. Number of addicts abusing injectable drugs is less because they do not come for OPD treatment. Common and interesting co-abuse of an I/V cocktail of 6 mg buprenorphine with 10-20mg diazepam and 45-50 mg of pheniramine or 100-200mg of promethazine taken 2-4 times daily has been reported by Sharma & Mattoo(1990).

Number of cases reporting for treatment of alcoholism and tobacco has decreased only because alcohol and tobacco have become more socially acceptable. Another reason is that in this region until a person consumes up to 1 bottle a day, family members are not much bothered. Thirdly, in alcoholism, it is mostly the wives of addicts who come to take treatment in the form of Tab. disulfiram which they give to their husbands without the knowledge of their husbands. There are many quacks doing the business in the garb of Ayurvedic medicine. All India Institute of Medical Sciences has shown a significant decrease in the abuse of opium from 7.3% in 1991 to 3% in 1999, and increase in other opiates from 4.9% in 1991 to 10.7% in 1999(Personal communication). Umesh Babu et.al (1995) from Bangalore have reported decrease in the opium abuse & change for buprenorphine abuse in comparison from 1991 to 1995. Vasvani (1998) from AIIMS Delhi has reported increasing trend in abuse of benzodiazepine and other over the counter available drugs. Likewise Shetty et.al (1997) from Bombay have also reported more frequent abuse of diazepam, codeine containing cough syrups, promethazine and nitrazepam etc. Mattoo and Basu from Chandigarh (1997,1999) also have found increased abuse of codeine containing cough syrups especially in students of schools and colleges.Kumar (1991) from Kerala has also reported an increase in the abuse of medicinal and over the counter drugs like benzodiazepines, buprinorphine and codeine preparations. All these studies point out to the fact that the traditional abuse of opium etc is being replaced by more harmful over the counter drugs.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the fact that over the counter available drugs are replacing the traditionally abused opium. These
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Drugs are easily available. NDPS Act 1985 has certainly been a stringent factor for the decreased abuse of opium, but the easy availability of over the counter drugs is more harmful as abusers of I/V injections are more exposed to HIV. Infections as reported in Manipur by Singh & Sharma (1998) and Hazarika et al (1995). The policy makers, the professionals and other concerned persons should show their serious concern over the changing trends in drug abuse. Already some serious thinking is going on to maintain these I/V abuser addicts on tablets buprenorphine and there seems to be good weightage in this.

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JASWANT SINGH SACHDEV*, M.D., Prof. & Head, RANVIR SINGH YAKHMI, M.D., Department of Psychiatry, Guru Gobind Singh Medical College Faridkot, AJAY KUMAR SHARMA, M.A., M.Psych(Psychology), Project Incharge, Drug De-addiction and Counselling Centre Faridkot (Punjab)

* Correspondence