



Original Research Article

Pattern and Prevalence of Substance Abuse Among Medical Interns of a Tertiary Care Hospital; South India

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Article Information: Received on 22-03-2022 Accepted 29-04-2022 Available online 29/05/2022

Abstract

Background- Over the decades we are witnessing an increasing trends of substance abuse globally. Easy accessibility and work place stress adds on to the vulnerable medical students to indulge in various substance abuses. Here we aim to assess the pattern and prevalence of substance abuse among medical interns of a tertiary care hospital, Mangalore Karnataka.

Methods- A cross sectional survey was conducted among consented 114 medical interns using a semi structured proforma in a tertiary care hospital, Mangalore

Results- Prevalence of substance abuse were found to be 32% of which alcohol abuse was the highest followed by tobacco abuse and cannabis.

Conclusion- Substance abuse was highly prevalent among medical students. Early intervention to curb the dependence pattern is very much essential as to maintain the integrity of medical fraternity.

Keywords: Substance abuse, Pattern and Prevalence, Medical students

1. Introduction

World Health Organization (WHO) defines substance abuse as, "Persistent or sporadic use of a drug inconsistent with or unrelated to acceptable medical practice" [1] Worldwide substance abuse accounts for 12.4% of deaths of which 2 billion Alcohol users and 1.3 billion tobacco users were found. Overall, 185 million drug users were found during a survey conducted in 2015 [2].

First exposure to substance abuse usually takes place during adolescence. Academic stress, peer pressure and easy availability of substances like tobacco and other psychoactive drugs were the main reasons quoted [3].

Substance abuse among the medical students has a special significance as they are the future doctors who can treat and counsel the patients of substance abuse disorder [4].

Easy accessibility for various drugs makes medical professionals vulnerable to abuse those [5]. Stress and academic pressure add on to indulge more in substance abuse during medical training [6]. Deleterious effects of substance abuse might lead to legal, medical and ethical issues [7]. There is dearth of data regarding substance abuse among medical students and hence this study was undertaken.

Methods

It was a cross sectional study, conducted among 150 medical interns of 2017-18 batch in a tertiary care hospital after ethical committee approval. Using a Semi-structured proforma socio-demographic details like Gender, Family background, Religion etc., and Substance abuse patterns were recorded. Data collected was entered in Excel and analysed using Epi Info version 3.5.3

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doi: <http://doi.org/10.54618/IJMAHS.2022211>

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Results

Table-1 Showing demographic details of the study group

Variable	Number	Percentage
Religion		
Hindu	92	61.3
Christian	20	18.6
Muslim	28	13.3
Others	10	6.6
Gender		
Male	72	48
Female	78	52
Type of Family		
Joint	40	26.6
Nuclear	98	65.3
Broken	12	8
Residence		
Home	30	20
Hosteller	120	80

N=150

Table-2 Showing pattern of substance abuse among our study group

Substance abuse Present	48	32
Substance abuse Absent	102	68
Mean Age of onset	20±2	-
Substance abuse		
Alcohol	30	62.5
Tobacco	22	45
Cannabis	4	8.3
Stimulants	1	2.1
Hallucinogens	1	2.1
Others	2	4.2

N=48

Majority of the participants belongs to Hindu religion (61.3%), followed by Christian (18.6) and Muslim (13.3) in our study. 80% of them resided in hostel whereas only 20% in their home. 65.3% of them belonged to type of family and 26.6% were from joint family. Only 8% of them were from broken family (Table-1).

Substance abuse was reported among 32% of the study participants of which mean age of onset was 20±0.8 years. Alcohol topped the list with 62.5% followed by 45% of tobacco abuse and 8.3% of cannabis abuse. Stimulants and hallucinogens were reported in only 1 male participant respectively (Table-2).

Discussion

Substance abuse was reported among 32% of the study participants of which mean age of onset was 20±0.8 years. Comparatively higher results were seen by Qadri SS et al. [8] in north Indian medical school (60%) also

Datta A et al. [5] reported 57% of substance abuse among medical students in their medical college.

Hostellers abused more substance than those who resided at home in our study. This was supported by studies done by Mir AR et al. [9] (62.5%) and Baba T et al. [10] (37.5%). Mean age of initiation of substance abuse was 20±2 years in our study. Mir AR et al. [9] stated majority of their study population started abusing substance from 20-23 years of age which was similar to our results.

Among the abuser's alcohol was abused more (62.5%). Similar results were seen by Mir AR et al. [9] which showed 36.6% of total sample abused alcohol. Also, a study from Kolkata showed alcohol abuse was present in 27% of medical students [5] although comparatively lesser people 2.1% each abused stimulants and hallucinogens each, availability of these newer drugs is of raising concern. Tobacco was abused by 45% and cannabis accounted to 8.3% of total substance abusers in our study.

Conclusion

Substance abuse among medical professionals is of utmost concern as their own perception will influence in treating hazards of substance related disorders of general public also have an impact in their professional judgement. Higher prevalence of substance abuse among the members of this noble profession has to be addressed and proper steps has to be taken to reduce the burden of this social menace.

Funding- NIL

Conflicts of interest- NIL

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