

## NON-MEDICAL DRUG USE AMONG INTERNS AND HOUSE-OFFICERS

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### SUMMARY

Self-administered questionnaire was given to a sample of 105 interns and house officers working in Govt. Medical College, Jammu. Questionnaire was designed to obtain information about socio-demographic characteristics, the frequency of non-medical drug use during the last one year and to enquire about "reasons" for drug intake. It was found that drugs commonly used were alcohol, tobacco, tranquilizers, amphetamines, cannabis. Most of the subjects used the same for 'company', festivity or curiosity.

Recent studies have brought out an alarming observation in the increasing intake of drugs by the younger generation (WHO, 1973). Student community is more prone to drug use. Mohan and Arora (1979) reported prevalence rate of drug abuse to the extent of 50% among the Delhi University students. Agarwal *et al.* (1975) reported that 60.7% students had taken drugs at one time or the other in their sample. Some other investigators have reported similar results amongst medical students or interns (Joshi and Bharadwaj, 1978, Sethi & Manchanda, 1977, Singh & Singh, 1979).

### AIMS

1. To study the nature, pattern, and prevalence of non-medical drug use among a group of interns and house officers.

2. To study the sociodemographic variables in relation to drug usage and to obtain an insight into the "reasons" for indulgence in drugs.

### MATERIAL AND METHOD

One hundred and five interns and house officers in Govt. Medical College, Jammu were included in the present study.

TABLE No. I—Type of Drug used

Drug	Total (N=78)		Hostlers (N=28)		Day scholars (N=50)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Alcohol	53	(60.8)	21	(75.0)	32	(64)
Smoking	47*	(60.2)	25*	(89.3)	23*	(44)
Tranquilizers	35	(44.9)	12	(42.8)	23	(46)
Amphetamins	12	(15.4)	6	(21.4)	6	(12)
Cannabis	16	(20.5)	8	(28.6)	8	(16)
Pain Killers	12*	(15.4)	1**	(3.6)	11**	(22)

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

\*p<0.01, \*\*p<0.05

TABLE No. II—Frequency of Drug Use

Drug	Frequency of Drug Use			
	Once a while (1-10 times in a year)	Once a month	Once a week	Frequent use
Alcohol	34 (64.1)	9 (17.0)	4 (7.5)	6 (11.3)
Smoking	20 (42.5)	1 (2.1)	2 (4.2)	24 (51.1)
Tranquilizers	38 (80.0)	5 (14.3)	—	2 (5.7)
Amphetamines	9 (75.0)	1 (8.3)	1 (8.3)	1 (8.3)
Cannabis	15 (93.7)	—	—	1 (6.2)
Pain Killers	3 (25.0)	2 (1.7)	2 (16.7)	5 (41.7)

Figure in parenthesis indicate percentage.

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TABLE No. III—Prevalence of Non-medical drug use

Frequency of Drug use	Total (N=78)	Hostlers (N=28)	Day scholars (N=50)
Once a while (1-10 times in a year)	31 (39.74)	6 (21.43)	25 (50)
Once a month	10 (12.82)	4 (14.38)	6 (12)
Once a week	5 (6.41)	2 (7.14)	3 (6)
Frequent use	32 (42.02)	16 (57.14)	16 (32)*

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages.

\* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.02$

TABLE No. IV—Reasons for taking Drugs

Reasons	Hostlers (N=26)	Day Scholars (N=50)	Total (N=78)
For the sake of company	12 (42.85)	21 (42)	33
To celebrate some special/occasions parties etc.	12 (42.95)	18 (36)	30
Out of curiosity just to experience the effect of drug	12 (42.95)	13 (26)	25
To induce sleep	35 (10.71)	13 (26)	16
To get kicks, thrills or pleasure	4 (14.38)	9 (18)	13
To overcome boredom	3 (10.71)	7 (14)	10
To keep awake	2 (7.14)	4 (8)	8

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

Pre-designed non-identifiable and self-administered questionnaires covering the basic socio-demographic aspects; type, patterns, frequency and reasons for the drug intake were used for the purpose. Drug(s) taken only during the last one year were to be reported. Recorded information from males was collected, the next day, while the females were given self-addressed stamped envelopes and requested to send by mail.

## RESULTS

Out of one hundred and five subjects only ninety-six responded. Thus the responder rate was 91.43%. There were 86.5% (86) males and 13.5% (13) females among the responders. Whereas day scholars (64.59%) outnumbered the boarders, there were only 23.96% responders who hailed from rural areas.

81.26% (78) were making use of drug(s) during the last one year without a medical prescription. There were 85.54% males and 53.84% females who were using drugs. Considering individual drugs alcohol was used by 62.82%, tobacco by 60.25%, tranquillizers by 44.87%, cannabis by 20.51% and amphetamines and pain killers by 15.38% each. Use of methaqualone, barbiturates and chewing tobacco was low; being used by 4, 2 and 3 respondents respectively. Opiates and volatile agents were not at all used. Use of pain killers and smoking was higher in boarders than in day scholars and difference was significant at  $p < 0.05$  and  $< 0.01$  respectively.

Regarding the frequency of drugs used 51.06% made frequent use of pain killers. There was no appreciable difference between the acceptance of drug among those hailing from rural areas (78.26%) or urban areas (82.14%) as well as between the boarders (82.34%) and day scholars (80.06%). To be part of a company or to enjoy a festivity or often curiosity were the commonly reported reasons for drug intake, common to boarders and day-scholars.

## COMMENTS

The results showed that alcohol was clearly number one drug, ever used by the subjects (62.82%). It is in accordance with the findings recently reported by Mohan and Arora (1979), Mohan *et al.* (1978) and Sethi and Manchanda (1978).

Next to Alcohol, tobacco was the drug being utilized by the largest number of

subjects (60.25%). Tobacco use was higher in hostelers than among the day scholars. Most studies have not included tobacco among the drug surveys. However, Mohan *et al.* (1978), who surveyed tobacco use reported to a larger percentage of regular use of tobacco as compared to other drugs. Tranquillizers were also used by a larger part of the sample (44.87%), though use was only *once in a while* for about 80% of the subjects. Among the other drugs, amphetamine & cannabis were used by the subjects. However, the frequency was negligible. Similar findings have been reported by Varma (1977, 1979) and Mohan *et al.* (1978).

Several reports are emerging from different parts of the country about the drug use amongst students and general population.

There is, however, a considerable need to standardize the methodologies employed in such studies.

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