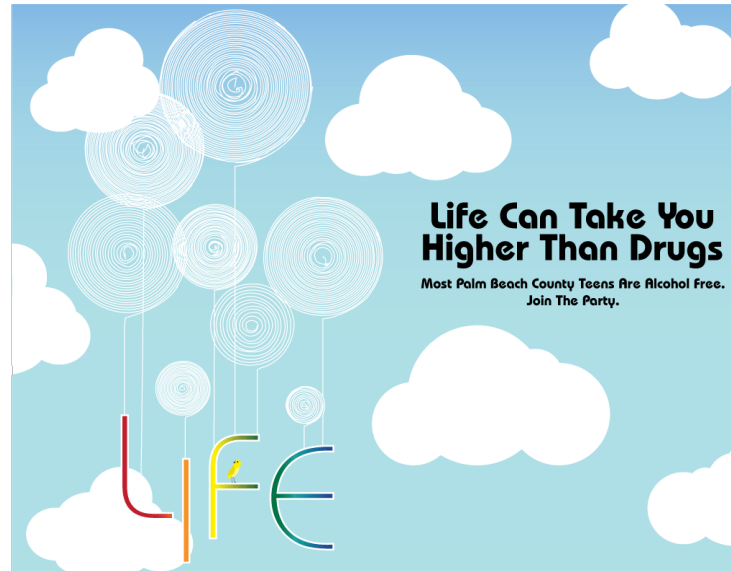


Substance Abuse: Prevention and treatment approaches In Nepal



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Genesis

Drugs like wine, narcotics and marijuana used from 4000 B.C.

19th cent.: Active substances in drugs extracted.

Morphine was used during the American Civil War for wounded veterans.



History of drug use in Nepal

Etiology of drug use goes back to the Vedic period

- *'Som ras' and 'Sura ras'*
- *Ganja, bhang (cannabis)* mostly by sadhus and festivals
- *Yela, thon, jad, rakshi* (home made alcohols)
- *1960-70s 'Hippie era'*
- **1973** King Birendra bans cannabis use: ends Kathmandu as a final destination of the 'hippie trail'
- **After 1973** Drug use increased
- **2000 AD** Royal Massacre, Crown prince Dipendra supposed to be under the influence of *'unnamed black substance'*

What does medical science say about substance abuse and addiction

“Addiction is defined as a chronic, relapsing brain disease that is characterized by compulsive drug seeking and use, despite harmful consequences. It is considered a brain disease because drugs change the brain; they change its structure and how it works. These brain changes can be long lasting and can lead to many harmful, often self-destructive, behaviors.”

What does the data “Numbers” suggest

CBS survey 2069 on hard drug users

- **91000 hard drug users** in Nepal (i.e. the double of 46000 reported in 2063 BS)
- **6330 female** among the total number
- **13% of annual increase** rate
- **51000** among the total number **inject drugs** : at most risk to acquire HIV, Hepatitis and blood borne diseases
- The highest proportion of hard drug users, **33% is youth** (age group 20-24)
- **80%** of drug users used drugs **for first time at the age between : 10-19**
- **79%** intake drugs for first time **due to peer pressure** and **58% due to curiosity**

Available Services for substance abuse/ drug addiction

Prevention Approach

- Less efforts were made for prevention
- Government supporting with small grant to NGO (from former drug users) for drug prevention programme in school

Available Services for substance abuse/ drug addiction

Drug Free/ Total Abstinence Approach

- Drug Treatment and Rehabilitation Program : approx. 160 -180 facilities ran by NGOs
- Only few De- Addiction clinics in public/private hospitals offers drug detoxification
- Less than 5% stay abstinence from drugs

Available Services for substance abuse/ drug addiction

Harm reduction

- Needle Syringe Exchange Program and Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST) programme: Methadone and buprenorphine combined with psychosocial care
- There are altogether 12 OST centers based in public hospital (8) and in NGOs (4)
- Run under leadership of NCASC/Ministry of Health with support from the Global Fund

Challenges

- **Culturally/ legally accepted** getaway drugs : **cigarettes, alcohol, cannabis** promoting drug use
- **Less talk** about drug use
- **Internet**
- **No guideline** document **on** substance abuse **prevention program**
- **Lack of adequate prevention** program in general
- **Lack of intervention** from **school and parents** for adolescents
- **Rehabs ran by former drug users** based on own experience and **none are specialized in treating younger people** and adolescents
- **Stigma and discrimination** make them more marginalized and also creates barriers to access services

Way Forward

- Government ownership
- Substance abuse prevention at school : capacity increase of schools, teachers, counsellors
- Informative materials, increased awareness through media

