

# Free essay on drug abuse and addiction

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Drug abuse is the chronic or excessive use of mind altering drugs to an extent that interferes with the social adjustment or health of an individual. The most vulnerable group to drug abuse is the youth, many of whom yield to the peer pressure into becoming regular drug abusers. The other factors are lack of moral education and parental care, broken homes, media, pop culture, and depression. Drug abuse affects the society in many ways such as increased criminal activities, spread of HIV and other infections, deaths on the road and off the road, medical expenses and disruption of families and local communities. Addiction and dependence occurs when an individual has to use a substance to function normally. Drug abuse becomes a social problem when the users engage in criminal activities to obtain money to support addiction; non-abusers are involved in drug related accidents or crime, or when the costs of medical services rise due to drug abuse. It is critical not to view drug abuse as a law and order issue where all drug users are considered criminals and must be arrested and locked up. Addicts need to be treated as patients in urgent need of both medical and social help. The social concerns that result from drug abuse include drug toxicity, potential addiction and drug related crime. Drug toxicity may either refer to dangerous disruption to normal behavior or to physiological poisoning. It can be acute, due to an overdose, or chronic, caused by a long term exposure to the drug. For instance, heroin toxicity may be due to an overdose or in a “body stuffer.” The latter involves swallowing of small packets of heroin and is usually done by smugglers. The drugs may also be concealed in the rectum or vagina. The rupture of the packets can cause poisoning. The toxic effects include respiratory depression, mental depression, and euphoria. Cocaine is

second to marijuana as the most widely abused illegal drug in the U. S. An overdose leads to restlessness, nausea, headaches, convulsions, increased heart rate and blood pressure. It can cause sudden death due to cardiovascular or respiratory collapse. Drug users who inject drugs face the risk of acquiring infections such as HIV, hepatitis B, and bacterial infections. Drug abuse may lead to addiction and dependence. The process leading to dependence involves tolerance, physical dependence and psychological dependence. Tolerance describes the situation where an abuser requires a higher dosage of a drug to achieve the same effects as the previous dose. The body generally becomes unresponsive to a lower drug dosage. Physical dependence becomes evident when the drug user attempts to stop abusing the drug. It is signified by the development of withdrawal symptoms when the drug use is stopped suddenly. Characteristics of psychological dependence are drug craving, increased rate of use and high incidences of relapse when usage is stopped. Alcoholism is a major problem in the U. S. It is estimated that about 8 million American adults suffer from alcohol dependency. The social and personal costs of alcohol dependency are grave. It is associated with financial problems, loss of jobs, low productivity, wrecked marriages, domestic violence, and sexual attacks including rape. Drug related crime may occur in many ways. It may be direct when it involves the possession, use, manufacture or distribution of illicit drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, heroin and amphetamines. Drug production and trafficking are crimes that involve drug cartels and gangs. Rival gangs occasionally engage in violence while trying to control the drug business. A drug user may become violent when under the influence of drugs or turn into

criminal activities to support his/her dependence. The use of marijuana and opioids has been overwhelmingly linked to criminal activities. The users engage in crime to get money in order to support their drug dependency. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics robbers, drug offenders and burglars are most likely to be under the influence of drugs while committing crime. The Department of Justice records that 37% of the two million convicts currently in jail, were either drunk or drinking when they were arrested. Alcohol related crime may also affect non-users. Every year about 600, 000 students of ages between 18 and 24 report to have been assaulted by a drunken student. It is also important to note that 36 people perish daily and about 700 others suffer injuries in motor vehicle accidents involving drunk drivers.

The treatment of drug abuse is challenging. The approach used help the patient cope with cases of withdrawal syndromes and relapse. The setting should be conducive enough to allow for abstinence, for example a hospital, support group or a rehabilitation center. Psychological disorders should also be treated since they contribute to drug abuse. Biological approaches to treatment involve detoxification, anti-abuse drugs such as disulfiram, and antidepressants. A culture sensitive approach takes into consideration both cultural and racial identity of the addict. Counselors work with drug addicts to increase the success rates of therapy. The community at large plays an important role in identifying drug cartels and reporting them to the authorities.

Drug abuse and addiction is a social problem with no positive effects. The health effects to the users overwhelm the perceived benefits. The social

problems like crime and violence that may lead to death would be less without illegal drugs. As a social problem, a social approach is the most appropriate approach towards solving this issue. A judicial approach would only be dealing with the problem superficially.

## **References**

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