

Substance abuse and the elderly population

Sociology



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Some participants were “ early-onset” drug users. These users started substance abuse at an early age especially during adolescence and early adulthood periods. The habit began as a result of experimentation, peer pressure, and recreational use. Other respondents began the use of substances later in life due to stressful life experiences like the death of close relatives, divorces or pressure from drug user partners and friends. The research found there were negative effects on the health status of drug abusers. In addition, substance abusers lived a poor quality of life compared to other people. Most of the substance users lived alone with shreds of evidence of social isolation. Among the eleven interviewed, divorced respondents were five and the rest six had not married. Eight respondents lived alone. The research also found that older people who were abusing drugs died earlier than other elder people who did not abuse substances. According to the results of the study, aging people used the drug according to personal choice in accordance with the effects and availability of drugs and substances. Drugs abused included cannabis, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), amphetamines, morphine, heroin, tobacco, and alcohol. Participants had various adverse health conditions such as circulatory problems, diabetes, liver cirrhosis, and hepatitis. In addition, there were pieces of evidence of weight loss, anxiety, impaired mobility, obesity, malnutrition, paranoia and memory loss.

Researcher’s recommendations

The researcher suggested that further research to be done on specific needs of aging populations and various services should be established to meet the various needs of the aging population.

Effect on practices of social worker

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The study on substance abuse and the elderly population should be expanded, and numerous study is done. It is important to know what influences the aging population into substance abuse. I recommend further research to determine why the aging population engages in substance abuse. As a social worker, the study will help me in dealing with the aging population and advise them on various activities they can engage in instead of substance abuse.