

# how drugs affect the health triangle essay



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Illegal drugs were first used way before the history was recorded. On that time, they were used to cure diseases and were legal. However, as time passes by, doctors had discovered that these drugs could do more harm than good. Although some of the drugs were considered useful, their side effects may be costly and not worth the risk. As a child, most of the people were taught that using and taking illegal drugs could harm the body. Yet, according to 2010 National Survey on Drug use and Health, more than 22 million Americans age 12 and older—nearly 9% of the United States population—use illegal drugs (Cooper).

And more than 20% of young people in the United States have experimented with inhalants at least once by the time they enter 8th grade (Cavendish 497). Furthermore, in 2010, there were 80, 000 drug overdose deaths in the US, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's WONDER database (" Which Drugs Actually Kill Americans"). With ignorance, many drug users suffer badly from their own actions, due to the fact that drugs have many lasting effects on the person's physical, emotional, and social well-being.

As a connotation that comes with drugs, they often jeopardize our bodily functions, depreciates the well-being of our physical health. Drugs could corrupt all parts and organs of the body—mainly the heart, brain, lungs, and kidney. Even worse, it could impair the nervous system and could even lead to seizures and paralysis. Although many people are aware of this destructive behavior of drugs, they still take drugs. And as a result, many people's lives were damaged. Drugs often target and alter

neurotransmitters, the chemical messengers that allow nerves to communicate at their junctions.

Repeatedly taking them could interfere the neurotransmitters in the brain, leading to addiction. For example, drugs like marijuana and heroin mimic natural neurotransmitters. This fools receptors and allows the drug to lock onto and activate nerve cells, leading to the transmission of abnormal messages. All drugs of abuse target the brain's reward system by flooding the circuit with dopamine, a neurotransmitter that regulates feelings of pleasure, which leads the brain to adjust to the surges by reducing the number of receptors.

This represses the dopamine function and the user must take more and more drugs to reactivate the dopamine release (Grabish 23). Drugs that cause addiction also cause an increase in dopamine levels, so they create dependencies by subverting the reward system. In the case of amphetamine, the drug causes stores of dopamine and other neurotransmitters in neurons to dump their contents onto synapses. On the other hand, cocaine blocks the reuptake mechanism that clears dopamine and other neurotransmitters from synapses and returns them to storage.

In other case, rapidly increasing concentrations of synaptic dopamine cause by pleasurable sensations courtesy of the dopamine system. (Cavendish 283) Drugs directly damage fragile developing neural connections in the adolescent's brain, intervening with the teenager's developing perceptual skills. The habits and choices associated with the use of drugs slowly become ingrained in the wiring of the brain. Repeated actions becomes habits of

though, perception, and reasoning developed in childhood and adolescence and can stay with a person throughout the lifetime (Cavendish 23).

Studies of the MRI shows that adults tend to use frontal lobe or logical problem solving to determine facial expressions, while adolescents use amygdala, which processes emotions such as fear and worry. This proves that the adolescents use primitive areas of the brain more associated with emotion. Since the adolescent's perceptive abilities are not mature, perceptual changes cause by drugs can have long-term complications for adolescent's development (Cavendish 34). Not only drugs corrupt the brain and its system, it may also be one of the causes of cardiovascular diseases.

Chest pain syndromes, heart attacks, heart failure, strokes, aortic dissection, and fatal/non fatal arrhythmias, are one of the most common diseases found in drug users. Some of these potentially fatal complications can occur in first-time user due to a sudden decrease in blood pressure and an increase in heart rate. Older people with abnormal coronary arteries and diseased blood vessels in the brain are also at even greater risk (Cavendish 438). Drugs like cocaine, amphetamine, and ecstasy can produce a procoagulant effect by decreasing concentrations of protein C and antithrombin 3 and potentiating thromboxane production.

Long-term use of these drugs can cause repetitive episodes of coronary spasm and paroxysms of hypertension, which may result in endothelial damage, coronary artery dissection, and acceleration of atherosclerosis. On the other hand, lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) and psilocybin, as known as magic mushroom, cause serotonin-induced platelet aggregation and

sympathetically induced arterial vasospasm, which can also be a contributory factors leading to myocardial infarction (Ghuran and Nolan).

While drugs affect the physical health, taking massive amount of them could even worse—lead to death. Data from the World Health Organization (WHO) suggested that there were more than 250, 000 deaths worldwide due to illicit drug use in 2004 (“ Illegal Drugs Cause 250, 000 Global Deaths Yearly, Report Finds”). Furthermore, people who uses drugs often has a higher risk of getting STDs, chronic bronchitis, Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), seizures, paralysis, damaged vital organs, including diseases of the liver, kidney, and lungs (“ Drug Addiction Disease”).

For instance, cocaine constricts blood vessels, dilated pupils, and increases body temperature, heart rate, and blood pressure. People who use cocaine can suffer heart attacks or strokes and put themselves at risk for contracting HIV, which may lead to death (“ DrugFacts: Cocaine”). Mental and emotional health plays a big role in a person’s lives. Therefore, if a person’s mental state is ill, it creates problems and builds up barriers to being happy. There are two factors that may affect the person’s mental health—internal and external influences.

Often the person’s mental health is affected by external influences, and one of them is drug. Drugs that are psychoactive, such as cannabis, alcohol, ecstasy, and heroin, have the ability to affect a person’s moods. They can arouse certain emotions and dampen down others. The changes in the mood or behavior caused by drugs are the result of changes to the brain, which is also the part that controls mental health (“ Drugs and Mental Health”). Such

psychoactive drugs are often referred to hallucinogens, which are substances that produce mind-altering effects.

These drugs are placed into schedule I of the Controlled Substance Act, the most restrictive category of all drugs, based largely upon the fact that hallucinogens have not accepted medical value and have been widely used as recreational drugs, which have a property that can dominate the person's thoughts and lower the consciousness and capability to think straight or remember things (Cavendish 426). Many people who experience anxiety or depression may turn into using drugs and other substance in order to change their mood and seek relief from the pain of depression.

However, without their awareness, many drugs used in this way are not only highly addictive, but they actually worsen the symptoms of depression and anxiety (Wilkinson 20). For example, depressants such as barbiturates and benzodiazepines slow down the central nervous system of the body, which creates a feeling of relaxation and reduced anxiety. These substances are legal only if prescribed by a doctor. If used in a wrong way, depressants are very addictive, which means the user may have a constant craving for more drugs and need to avoid the crash that brings on painful cramps, sweats, and chills (Clayton 23).

Another example is stimulants such as cocaine and crack, which speeds up the user's mind and body and creates a feeling of increased energy and alertness. This euphoria lasts for a short time and the crash that follows is long, leaving the user depressed, drowsy, and moody. Stimulants are very addictive and can cause severe paranoia and loss of self-control (Wilkinson

22). Drug addiction may lead to craving for more and more drugs. And without drugs, a person could be in a state of depression, which leads to committing suicide. Statistics have shown that drugs in the United States are involved in around 50% of suicide attempts.

In 2000, it was the leading cause of death in the United States, for 1. 2% of all deaths. Mental health can be an important factor. Researchers in the United States have shown important links between bipolar disorder, substance abuse, and suicide. Studies show that substance abuse increased the risk of suicidal factor by 2. 2% (Cavendish 815). Moreover, in related to suicidal behavior, taking drugs can cause social isolation, low self esteem, loss of work or school, estrangement from family and friends, which all events can be a factor of stresses that may lead to suicidal tendencies.

Also, drugs can increase the impulsiveness and decrease inhibitions, another factor that can also be a cause of suicide (Burks). When taking hallucinogenic drugs such as marijuana, hashish, LSD, peyote, magic mushrooms, mescaline, PCP, and ecstasy, hallucinations may occur, which could distort perception, though, emotion, and take actions without consciousness (Wilkinson 23). These substances alter the person's perceptions of reality and alteration of other senses. Hallucinogens have common side effect of distortion of sensory perception and other psychic and somatic effects.

It causes both physical and psychological effects on humans. People that are using hallucinogenic drugs often report to see images, hearing sounds, and feeling sensations that seem real, but do not exist (Ebbit). Drugs are also an

important factor for a corrupted social health. People who experience stress may try using drugs to search for relief. However, taking drugs can cause social isolation, which may lead to an estrangement from family or friends. Moreover, it could also cause a decreased self esteem in a person, which all factor leads to depression.

Even worse, the actions that the drug users make could lead to a huge impact to the society. Due to the impulsiveness and decreased inhibitions from drugs, a person could have a possibility to commit a crime. Research carried out on drug-related crime found out that a person who take drugs may have the feeling of invincibility, which could lead to shoplifting, property crime, drug dealing, violence and aggression, and driving while being intoxicated. In United States, illegal drugs are related to crime in multiple ways.

Most of it is a crime to possess, manufacture, or distribute drugs classified as having a potential for abuse. In 2002, about a quarter of convicted property and drug offenders in local jails of United States have confessed that they had committed their crime to get money for drugs. This pattern was also similar in 2004, with drug offenders (26%) more likely to commit their crimes for drug money than violent. Also in 2004, about 17% of United States state prisoners and 18% of federal prisoners said they committed their current offense to obtain money for drugs (“ Drug Related Crime”).

For example, benzodiazepines have been used popularly as a tool of murder by serial killers and other murderers. It also has been used to facilitate rape or robbery crimes. Temazepam and midazolam are two examples of the



most common benzodiazepines used to facilitate date rape. People who use drugs also may experience sexual dysfunctions, one of a huge problem in social health between spouses. Although drugs such as ecstasy, crystal meth, cocaine, and marijuana are used to increase libido, repeated use of these drugs cause long-term damage to the body and create even more problems of sexual dysfunction.

To support more of this, drugs that affect libido usually act centrally and may reduce desire by causing sedation or hormonal disturbance. Drugs that interfere with the autonomic system will have negative effects on erectile function, ejaculation, and orgasm. It also interferes with hormones, such as tamoxifen, which will also affect the vaginal response (Cavendish 782).

Drugs are also connected with disunited families. Families of the addicts are victims of abuse, because addicted parents can seldom offer a stable family life to their children.

The link of a parent and a child may even be destroyed. Drug addicted parents often get indebted, steal from friends or family, or lose their job. Moreover, the drug consume can lead to physical abuse on the partner and children. Cocaine, especially when mixed with alcohol, can induce a violent behavior even on persons that are normally calm and quiet. Researchers show that 17% of the drug consumers become aggressive after taking the drug and around 73% of the children were beaten to death by the addicted parents in New York (Anitei).

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