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TRENDS IN ABUSE AND MISUSE OF PRESCRIPTION DRUGS IN NIGERIA: A CALL TO ATTENTION FOR HEALTH EDUCATORS

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Abstract

Difficulty of utilizing drugs or chemicals for the purpose of treatment and relief from discomfort has led to misuse and abuse of medical drugs which has become a concern. Consequently, urgent attention is required from the society since its dimension has necessitated banning of some pharmaceutical drugs by the Nigeria Federal Ministry of Health in order to stop patronage by drug abusers, thereby denying those in need of the drugs legitimately access to treatment. Banned importation of selected drugs such as pain killer tramadol, cough syrups containing codeine has not decreased level of drug abuse and constitutes challenges not only to the government but also health organizations, health promoters and the society at large. This article provides insight to emerging trend in the abuse and misuse of medical drugs within the country with Opioids as the second most commonly abused drugs. This article explored three main prescription drugs commonly misused including reasons and consequences of abuse. Also, discussed is influence of social media, information and communication technology (ICT) on the use of prescription drugs including the roles of the Health Ministry and Agencies for drug protection. The paper explored the roles of health educators in the prevention of misuse and abuse of prescription drugs; and therefore, concluded that there is need to intensify drug education an aspect of health education to curb the abuse and misuse of prescription drugs using various strategies and media of health communication. It was recommended that routine checks at various points where suspected drugs could be abused such as pharmacy, clubs and hotels. Provision of valid identity cards to all residents in the country including minors to minimize the rate of drug abuse and that Nigerian Government should work closely with the internet service providers of different telecommunication agencies to restrict certain information from teenagers.

Keywords: Abuse, Drug, Education, Misuse, Prescription

Introduction

Generally, drugs are regarded as medicines used to alleviate pains, suffering and achieve healing or cure for various ailments whether acute, sudden or chronic in nature. Drugs are normally prescribed by healthcare providers or practitioners and sometimes got Over The Counter (OTC) in Patent Medicine shops popularly known as 'Chemists' usually manned trained Dispensers in our communities. In recent times drugs have been defined by scholars to mean: any substance other than food that provides nutritional support) that, when inhaled, injected, smoked, consumed, absorbed via a patch on the skin, or absorbed under the tongue, causes physiological and often psychological changes in the human body (Alorfi, 2023).

The advent of information and communication technology through the use of Smartphone, Laptops and other gadgets has continued to increase the level of inquisitiveness of Nigerians to enquire more about emerging issues without seeking professional advice especially from medical experts. The issue of drugs has not been left out as some adolescents and young adults have the eagerness to try new things based on information via the media, friends and society thereby causing maladjusted behaviours, mental disorder, crime, violence, rape, accidents, and deaths among others. This has made users consume drugs via personal experimentation in order to satisfy their urge (Jatau et al., 2021).

Manchikanti et al. (2010) confirmed that the reason for the abuse of prescription drugs varies by gender and mainly attached to ease of access. These days, drugs can be purchased from online stores without stepping into the Pharmacy. Ozor (2016) reported that ninety percent of road accidents were as a result of drug abuse. The increasing rate of medical complications such as addiction among Nigerians due to the illicit use of prescription drugs has led to the ban of drugs such as Tramadol and Cough syrups with codeine.

Rang et al. (2011) described drugs as substances that cause a change in physiology and psychology of a person when consumed. Drugs are not categorized as food and substances that provides nutritional support. Drugs are consumed through mouth, inhalation, injection, absorption. Drugs are chemical substances that produce a biological effect on a person when administered. A pharmaceutical drug is called a medication or medicine which is a chemical substance used in the treatment, cure, prevention or diagnosis of a disease in order to promote well-being. Locally, drugs are obtained through extraction from

medicinal plants but recently through organic synthesis. These drugs are being used within limited time while others are used on regular basis for chronic diseases (Atanasov et al., 2015).

Egbejule (2016) reported that the National Agency for Food, Drug Administration & Control (NAFDAC) classified drugs as stimulants, hallucinogens, narcotics, tranquillizers, sedatives and miscellaneous, which includes solvents and other mixtures. Misuse of prescription drugs involves consumption of a medication in a manner that has not been prescribed by a medical doctor such as taking prescriptions given to other persons irrespective of it being a legitimate complaint such as for pain relief; or consumption of medications to feel euphoric (Ifeadi & Agodi, 2024).

According to Ifeadi and Agodi (2024), non-medical use of prescription drug have been classified into three categories of most commonly misused as follows: Opioids prescribed to treat pains; Depressant prescribe to depress the central nervous system (CNS) such as tranquilizers, sedatives, and hypnotics which are used to treat sleep disorders and anxiety; and stimulants often prescribed to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Consuming drugs without prescription or following prescription can lead to harmful effects on the consumers leading to illness, disability, suicide attempts and deaths.

According to the recent world drug report-2019 by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 271 million (5.5) out of the total global population (between 15 and 64 years old) had used a drug in the past year. There has also been an estimated figure of 35 million people who will be undergoing drug use disorders (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2019). More so, according to Global Burden of disease Study 2017, in 2017, one out of five hundred and eighty-five thousand (585,000) people were reported dead by drug use, worldwide (UNODC, 2019).

Drug use was most common among those who were between the ages of 25 and 39 years, while the rates of past year use were lowest among those who were below 24 years of age. Cannabis was the most commonly used drug followed by opioids, mainly the non-medical use of prescription opioids and cough syrup. A dichotomy in the past year prevalence of drug use was found between the North and South geopolitical zones. Highest past-year prevalence of drug use was found in the southern political zones: South-East, South-West, and South-South zones (past year prevalence ranging between 13.8–22.4 percent of the population, compared to the North ranging between 10–14.9 per cent of the population (Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, 2015).

Studies have shown that, majority of the Nigerian youths ignorantly depend on one form of drug or the other for their various daily activities-social, educational and political. Studies on young person's vulnerability revealed that most of the drug addicts started smoking from their youths. As they grow older, they seek new thrills and gradually go into hard drug abuse, (Oshodiet al., 2010). A nationwide survey of high school students reported that 65 percent used drugs to have good time with their friends, 54 percent wanted to experiment to see what it is like, 20 percent to 40 percent used it to alter their moods, to feel good, to relax, to relive tension and to overcome boredom and problems (Abudu, 2008). No single factor could be defined as solely responsible for the abuse of drugs but the following are some of the causes of young people vulnerable to drug abuse in Nigeria (Oluremi, 2012; Desalu, et al., 2010; Ajibulu, 2011). According to them, the followings are some of the reasons why some youths take drugs; curiosity and desire to find out the effectiveness of a particular drug: curiosity to experiment the unknown facts about drugs thus motivates youths into drug use. The first experience in drug abuse produces a state of arousal such as happiness and pleasure which in turn motivate them to continue. Some time, youths take drugs in order to find out their effectiveness of a particular drug and if they find out that the drug is effective, they continue using such drugs (Awesu, 2018).

Kazeem (2018) reported the claim of Nigeria's senate of about three million bottles of codeine consumed daily by only two northern states. The misuse of prescription drugs since the last 15 years has reflected increase in emergency room visits; overdose deaths are associated with prescription drugs. Rudd et al., 2016). Addicts are said to frequently visit pharmacies to threaten staff in order to sell the free drugs provided by government. This drastically reduces the dosage available to patients who genuinely need them. These actions were as a result of weak laws that could not control the kind of drugs people purchase from the pharmacies and medical outlets. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2018) reported that treatment admissions for prescription drug use disorders with the most severe form to be an addiction. Overdose deaths involving prescription opioids were reported to be five times higher in 2016 compared to the year 1999.

Prescription Drugs Commonly Misused

Opioids

Dowell et al. (2016) confirmed that Opioids are medications that act on opioid receptors in both the spinal cord and brain to reduce the intensity of pain signal perception. They also affect brain areas that control emotion, which can further diminish the effects of painful stimuli that has been used for centuries to treat pain, cough, and diarrhea. The most common modern use of opioids is to treat acute pain. However, since the 1990s, they have been increasingly used to treat chronic pain, despite sparse evidence for their effectiveness when used for long term. Indeed, some patients experience a worsening of their pain or increased sensitivity to pain as a result of treatment with opioids, a phenomenon known as Hyperalgesia (Hart & Ksir, 2012).

Central Nervous System (CNS) Depressants

Gunja (2013) observed that CNS depressants, a category that includes tranquilizers, sedatives, and hypnotics, are substances that can slow brain activity. This property makes them useful for treating anxiety and sleep disorders. Benzodiazepines, non-benzodiazepine sleep medications and Barbiturates are among the medications commonly prescribed for these purposes.

Stimulants

Stimulants increase alertness, attention, and energy, as well as elevate blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration. In the case of stimulants, 45.3% lifetime and current use, 69.2% lifetime and 15.6% lifetime were reported in South East, North Central and Southwest Nigeria respectively (Duru et al., 2017; Babalola et al., 2014). Historically, stimulants were used to treat asthma and other respiratory problems, obesity, neurological disorders, and a variety of other ailments. But as their potential for misuse and addiction became apparent, the number of conditions treated with stimulants has decreased (Scammell, 2015). Now, stimulants are prescribed for the treatment of only a few health conditions, including attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), narcolepsy, and occasionally treatment-resistant depression (Saliba, 2016).

Reasons for Abuse and Misuse of Prescription Drugs

Kazeem (2018) reported on the quest for teenagers and young adults to access cheap drugs like syrups with codeine that can make them high with a price of one-thousand-naira equivalent to an estimate of 3 dollars. The purchase of the prescription drug is illegal but were widely available in the market. This opioid syrup was consumed as a whole at once for immediate effect of being mixed with other kind of drinks be it soft or hard at various homes, small gatherings, local clubs and parties.

The problem is more acute in Nigeria's vast north where millions of young adults are unemployed. Its prevalence is also rooted in culture: with the sale of alcohol banned across most northern states mainly for religious reasons, young adults and teenagers often turn to cheap opioid-based drugs, especially codeine cough syrups, as an alternative. Those who cannot afford codeine syrups turn to more extreme options including lizard dung and cobwebs (Kazeem, 2018).

Molobe (2018) in a study on drug abuse and unsafe abortion among teenage girls in Nigeria revealed that the most abortion substances used by the teens were herbal mixtures which constitutes 38 percent among participants, 25.6 percents used synthetic substances and also for psychotropic drugs while 10.2 percent used prescribed drugs. This showed that most girls illegally make used of prescription drugs to induce abortion.

Other reasons why people take drugs

Other reasons why people use drugs vary greatly among individuals. Some persons trying to fix issues within their lives usually see drugs as the solution. A young person may be trying to fit in with their peers and views use of alcohol drugs as a means of feeling "a part of." In contrast, many individuals use drugs as a way to self-medicate, from chronic pain to mental health disorders, while many people use drugs to alleviate symptoms of an ailment

The National Institute on Drug Abuse, (NIDA, 2014) attributed some reasons for taking drugs to include the following:

Experimenting: Very curious people experiment with drugs or alcohol. It is a scenario that often starts with a young person using alcohol or marijuana out of curiosity. Young persons consider these harmless, adolescents' experiment with drugs and alcohol are more likely to develop substance use disorder (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2014).

Family History/Genetics: A family history of drug addiction, you may have a genetic predisposition to develop an addiction to drugs or alcohol. It is stated that about 30% – 70% of a person's risk for addiction is linked to the genes they are born with along with other social factors.

Prescription Drugs: A popular misconception holds that any medication prescribed by a doctor is safe. Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Doctors prescribe medications to alleviate symptoms of physical or mental health issues.

Poor health information on the risks of medications constitutes a problem in the communities. Chronic pain is often managed through opioid medications, which are highly addictive. Dependent upon the amount used and other factors, someone may require a medical detoxification just to stop using opioids. Likewise, those suffering from anxiety and depression get prescription of addictive medications to ease symptoms. Non-addictive medication and/or pain recovery services are often available.

Loneliness: An individual could feel lonely or isolated from friends and family. They turn to drugs and alcohol thinking that it will fill a void that they have been living with. People lacking positive daily interaction may choose to use substances to feel happy or content. In addition, users may begin to alienate themselves further if they fear being judged or that help is not available to them.

Peer pressure: The term applies to adolescents or young adults when individuals have need belong or associate. While others may feel the need to participate in difficult activities that must be done under influence alcohol or chemical substance. Occasionally, the pressure of being around others who are abusing drugs or alcohol can push someone to follow suit.

Beliefs that Drugs and Alcohol produce Good Feelings: There is a popular quote in the Big Book of Alcoholics Anonymous that states: 'Men and women drink essentially because they like the effect produced by Alcohol' while this seems obvious, some people like the effect so much that they are unable to stop. It may be difficult for an individual to see the harm in something that makes you feel good.

Mental Health Disorders: Depression, anxiety, can put individuals at higher risk of developing addiction. Using substances to cope with difficult feelings may seem like an easier path for some. Though they may seem crippling at times, there is help available to anyone struggling with a mental health disorder. Non-narcotic medications are often available for most mental health disorders. It's worth researching with a doctor to see if there is an alternative to addictive medications.

Recreation: Individuals who prefer to unwind or relax under the influence of drugs are called Recreational drug users. Most of whom are at risk addiction if drug use becomes more frequent especially if the substance in use is a highly addictive substance.

Alcohol Isn't Enough: When a few bottles of Beer after work or having drinks with friends at a local bar does not have the same effect that it used to. Some individuals end up "chasing a buzz" that they were once able to attain with a few drinks. This usually leaves someone powerless over alcohol and unable to quit drinking.

Self-Medicating: Individuals struggling with multitude of ailments may turn to drugs or alcohol to ease their pain. Mental health disorders and chronic pain leave people seeking solutions on their own. Alcohol or other substances can alleviate symptoms and seem like a short-term solution. Other factors that affect the likelihood and speed of developing an addiction include: Family history of addiction, drug addiction is more common in some families and likely involves genetic predisposition, lack of family involvement, early use and taking a highly addictive drug.

Harmful Effect of Misuse and Abuse of Prescription Drugs

Kazeem, (2018) asserted that thousands of young Nigerians already addicted are at risk of suffering from effects of sustained opioid abuse ranging from schizophrenia to organ failure. in addition to relieving pain, opioids also activate reward regions in the brain causing the euphoria that underlies the potential for misuse and substance use disorder. Chemically, these medications are very similar to heroin, which was originally synthesized from morphine as a pharmaceutical in the late 19th century. These properties confer an increased risk of substance use disorder even in patients who take their medication as prescribed. However, overdose is another significant danger with opioids, because these compounds also interact with parts of the brain stem that control breathing. Absorbing too much of an opioid can suppress breathing enough to suffocate the user (Jones et al., 2016).

Other Complications of Drug Misuse and Abuse

Legal or illegal, drug abuse results in the following medical consequences: cancers, cirrhosis of the liver, heart disease and stroke, HIV, hepatitis and lung disease, to name a few. According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, untreated addiction and risky use of drugs causes or contributes to more than 70 conditions requiring medical treatment. These effects of drug abuse are also responsible for 20 percent of drug related mortalities/deaths. Disrupted cognition, particularly in the domains of attention, working memory, and response inhibition, is a core phenotype of nicotine withdrawal and is clinically significant with respect to risk for relapse. During the first few days of the consumption of a depressant, a person usually feels sleepy and uncoordinated, but as the body becomes accustomed to the effects of the drug and tolerance develops, these side effects begin to disappear. When a person uses these drugs for a long time, he or she may need larger doses to achieve the therapeutic effects. Continued use can also lead to dependence and withdrawal when use is abruptly reduced or stopped. This is because CNS depressants work by slowing the brain's activity, when an individual stops taking them, there can be a rebound effect, resulting in seizures or other harmful consequences (Gunja, 2013).

McCabe and West, (2013) reported that with the stimulant category, such as cocaine, people are likely to become dependent on or addicted to prescribed stimulants. Withdrawal symptoms associated with discontinuing stimulant use include: fatigue, depression and disturbed sleep patterns. Repeated misuse of some stimulants can lead to feelings of hostility or paranoia, or even psychosis. High doses of a stimulant may result in dangerously high body temperature and an irregular heartbeat with potential for cardiovascular failure or seizures.

Molobe, (2018) observed that most teenagers who committed unsafe abortion experience post abortion syndrome because such abortions took place through the abuse of prescription drugs. They therefore pass through physical and emotional trauma and resort to further abuse of drugs including educational setback. Also, individuals who attempt to abort their babies through the use of psychotropic medications and other substances led to birth of deformed baby. Usually, the male partner responsible for the unwanted pregnancy influences the use of these drugs for induced abortion.

Studies in Nigeria reported different social consequences of drug use such as in family lives, loss in productivity and legal problems as consequence of drug use in their communities. Also, nearly 1 in 8 persons in the general population had experienced consequences of drug use by other people in families, workplace and communities (UNODC, 2018).

Social Media, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Misuse of Prescription Drugs

Kazeem, (2018) reported that use of codeine has become "cool" as pop culture references about the opioid have proliferated, particularly in the booming Afrobeats scene. "Diet", an Afrobeats song with the refrain, "on a Codeine diet" has become a big hit for three of Nigeria's biggest pop stars while the 'Risque' music video for Science Student by Olamide was banned by Nigerian media regulators. Codeine references also litter American hip hop as several big-name artists, including rapper Lil' Wayne, have released codeine-inspired tracks.

According to Molobe (2018), it was also found that teen surf on the internet to discover abortion pills and have been able to purchase these pills from the pharmacy shops without doctor's prescription. This confirms that the internet, through the use of Smart phones and other gadgets made easy access prescription drugs to source information in order abort pregnancy

Ministry and Agencies for Drug Protection

The National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) and the National Agency for Food Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) are the main federal agencies saddled with the responsibilities on drug prevention. In order to intensify efforts on the prevention of drug abuse and misuse, various units have emerged to carryout health promotions on the prevention of Drug abuse (NAFDAC, 2024, Abuchi et al., 2019). The formation of some of these agencies such as NAFDAC formed in 1992 under the Federal Ministry of Health, work in line with the 1988 World Health Assembly resolution that requested countries to help fight the global health threat posed by counterfeit pharmaceuticals (NAFDAC, 2024). In the quest for combating the issues of fake drugs NAFDAC adopted the use of Mobile Authentication Service (MAS) in order to authenticate pharmaceutical products through the consumers but did not pay adequate attention on the type of consumers that utilizes these drugs after authentication through text messages with the telecommunication networks (Khilae, 2016).

Roles of Health Educators in the Prevention of Misuse and Abuse of Prescription Drugs

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (2014) highlights the administration of screening and brief assessment tools by medical professionals in order to detect drug use before it becomes a serious problem. This assessment can be effective by collaborating with health educators to actualize the focus on prevention rather than cure through the other aspects as highlighted by the Institute such as provision of intervention, referral to substance abuse treatment for extensive assessment and care, follow up and medication if need. Health Awareness programme to sensitize drug users and educate community member on dangers and signals of drug misuse, abuse and addiction.

Curriculum enrichment and introduction of school-based health education is an effective medium to curb the misuse and abuse of drugs (Momanyi, 2024). Education for drug use and abuse prevention should be seen to include both formal and informal health curricula. Educators can pass appropriate information to students to create awareness on the implications of drug misuse using various strategies; there exist a safe and supportive school environment with clear policies that provides support and care with a counseling unit (Alarcó-Rosales et al., 2021). This can be fully achieved through the involvement of the family and community in the planning and delivery system. There should be a continuous monitoring mechanisms and review.

The use of mass media is also important for health educators in the campaign for prevention of drug abuse (Thorley, 20023). Mass media campaigns addressing existing knowledge and beliefs of the target audience, incentives or benefits for adopting desired behaviour that builds on existing motives, needs and values of the target audience should be communicated (Ngigi & Busolo, 2018). Emotional arousing fear appeal should be approached with great caution. Campaign messages directed to preteens and adolescents should capitalize on important themes in the development of adolescent identity, including freedom, autonomy, and peer group acceptance (Pfeifer & Berkman, 2018). In moving from childhood to adulthood, youth are in the process of developing an identity that is distinct from that of their parents (Kaniušonytė, & Žukauskienė, 2018). They therefore seek independence and autonomy, often manifested as a rejection of parental values and a thwarting of authority and conventional society. Campaigns should explore the use of "image" or "lifestyle" advertising to promote an active and healthy lifestyle that excludes substance use (Opesemowo & Taiwo, 2025).

Detoxification is normally the first step in treatment. This involves clearing a substance from the body and limiting withdrawal reactions. In 80 percent of cases, a treatment clinic will use medications to reduce withdrawal symptoms, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2019)

The Stages of Recovery: What Are They and Why Are They Important?

i. Pre-contemplation: As addiction worsens in severity, so do its consequences and their frequency. The individual does not realize he has a problem or need attention at all.

ii. Contemplation: The individual begins to realise the need for behaviour change.

iii. Preparation: The individual accepts to commence treatment to come off drugs. A first step of Counselling accepts to commence a Detoxification treatment.

iv. Action: The individual submit self for a Drug withdrawal programme. Detoxification involves clearing a substance from the body and limiting withdrawal reactions. Which is followed by the five stage treatment

v. Maintenance: Five stages include: Intake process Assessment; Behavioural therapy: Clinical and Case management; Substance use monitoring; Self – Help Peer Support groups. Some clients could decide to stop treatment at any of the stages or continue and complete the programme.

vi. Termination. If the client stops. Treatment has been Terminated but can decide to Continue treatment/ Care. The Treatment plan also involve Pharmacotherapy as considered necessary.

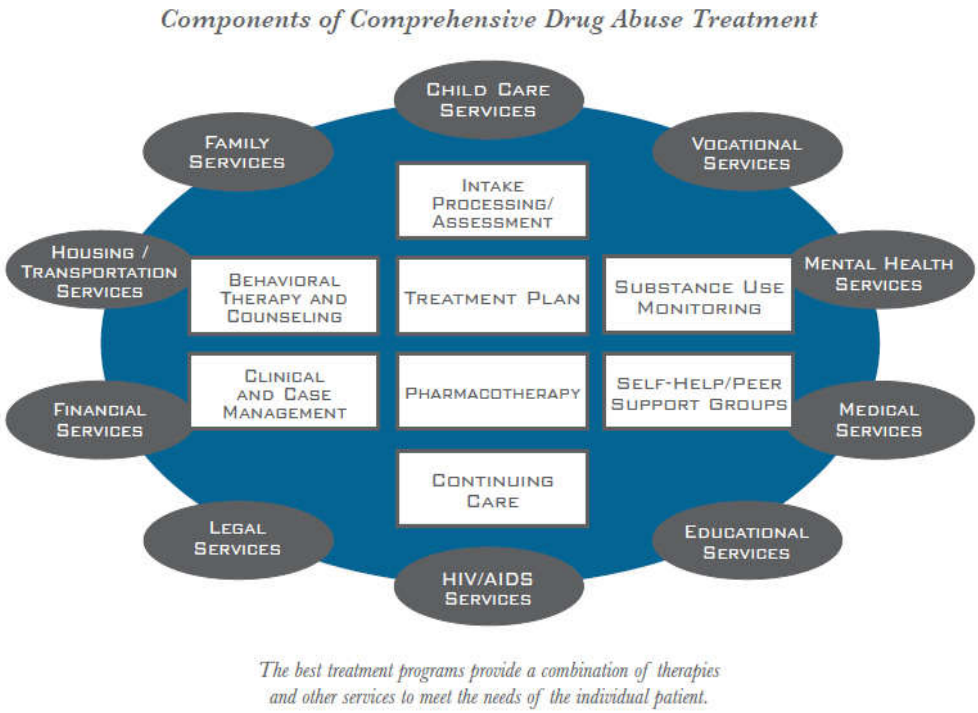


Figure 1: Components of Comprehensive Drug Abuse Treatment

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2019)

Drug addiction treatment can include medications, behavioural therapies or a combination. There are a variety of evidence-based approaches to treating addiction. Drug treatment can include behavioral therapy (such as cognitive-behavioral therapy or contingency management), medications, or their combination. The specific type of treatment or combination of treatments will vary depending on the patient's individual needs and, often, on the types of drugs they use.

Behavioral therapies can help motivate people to participate in drug treatment, offer strategies for coping with drug cravings, teach ways to avoid drugs and prevent relapse, and help individuals deal with relapse if it occurs. Behavioral therapies can also help people improve communication, relationship, and parenting skills, as well as family dynamics.

Many treatment programs employ both individual and group therapies. Group therapy can provide social reinforcement and help enforce behavioral contingencies that promote abstinence and a non-drug-using lifestyle. Some of the more established behavioral treatments, such as contingency management and cognitive-behavioral therapy, are also being adapted for group settings to improve efficiency and cost-effectiveness. However, particularly in adolescents, there can also be a danger of unintended harmful (or iatrogenic) effects of group treatment sometimes group members (especially groups of highly delinquent youth) can reinforce drug use and thereby derail the purpose of the therapy. Thus, trained counsellors should be aware of and monitor for such effects (SAMHSA, 2019).

The keys to finding the best addiction treatment for the client:

No treatment works for everyone. Everyone's needs are different. Whether there is a problem with illegal or prescription drugs, addiction treatment should be customized for unique situation. It's important that the programme feels right.

Treatment should address more than just drug abuse: Addiction affects the whole life, including relationships, career, health, and psychological well-being. Treatment success depends on developing a new way of living and addressing the reasons

why the person turned to drugs in the first place. For example, if drug dependency may have developed from a desire to manage pain or to cope with stress, in which case a person needs to find a healthier way to relieve pain or to handle stressful situations.

Commitment and follow-through is important: Drug addiction treatment is not a quick and easy process. In general, the longer and more intense the drug use, the longer and more intense the treatment needed. And in all cases, long-term follow-up care is crucial to recovery.

There are many places to turn for help; Not everybody requires medically supervised detox or an extended stint in rehab. The care you need depends on a variety of factors, including your age, drug-use history, medical or psychiatric conditions. In addition to doctors and psychologists, many clergy members, social workers, and health counsellors offer addiction treatment services.

Substance abuse and mental health: As you seek help for drug addiction, we need to get treatment for any other medical or psychological issues the individual is experiencing. The best chance of recovery is by getting combined mental health and addiction treatment from the same treatment provider or team.

Conclusion

Drugs of any kind are available in the communities and provide access for teenagers and young adults who are at risks of health complications in future due to the exploration, exposure and access to information that can lead to the abuse and misuse of drugs through the social media which majorly entails the use of Smart phones and Laptops. Mass media such as television with access to adult shows, unscrupulous and illicit music that promotes drugs also influence the minds of the masses to consume drugs so as to fulfill their lustful pleasures and demand rendering them to be an addict.

Drug education which is an aspect of health education is an effective means to curb the abuse and misuse of prescription drugs. This can be achieve through aggressive actions of Health Educators, utilizing various medias and strategies to prevent further increase in the abuse and misuse of drugs which will further minimize health complications. Health educators are expected to provide health information on drug use, misuse, abuse, prevention and complications to schools, colleges, tertiary institutions to reduce drug involvement among students.

Recommendations

The following are recommendations for combating the illicit use of prescription drugs:

1. Drug abuse prevention exercise should be intensified by Government and Non-Governmental organizations using various health education media and strategies to make target audience such as the use of audio-visual media in order to see the aftermath effect of drug abuse to minimize or stop the use of drugs indiscriminately.

2. There should be routine check-ups at various points where suspected drugs could be abused such as pharmacy, clubs, hotels and so on.

3. Provision of valid Identity cards to all residents in the country including minors so as to identify drug abusers at points of surveillance

4. Nigerian Government should work closely with the internet service providers of different telecommunication agencies within the country so as to adequately retrieve information of phone users particularly teenagers so as to restrict certain information from them to minimize the problems of drug abuse and misuse.

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