

PATTERN OF SUBSTANCE USE AMONG TEENAGED POISONED PATIENTS

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Objectives: The sociomedical phenomenon of substance use involvement remains among the most critical health issues in the Iranian society. The aim of the current study was to determine the frequency of overt and hidden substance use among teenagers who referred to Loghman-Hakim Hospital toxicological emergency department due to any complaint.

Methods: A total of 1850 patients were randomly selected for interview and drug screening tests from all those who referred to the toxicological emergency department of Loghman-Hakim hospital during a 12-month period. The patients were then categorized based on their age and evaluated in different age groups. In the group of the teenagers (aged 13 to 19 years), those who consented to give urine samples were included and sixteen substances including morphine, methadone, buprenorphine, oxycodone, tramadol, propoxyphene, amphetamine, methamphetamine, 3 & 4-methylenedioxy methamphetamine (MDMA), cocaine, ketamine, phencyclidine, tetrahydrocannabinol, benzodiazepines, ethanol, and barbiturates were checked for them using urine screening immunoassay kits. Hidden users were defined as those whose abuse was revealed by positive screening test results without giving a positive history of recent use of substances by the patients themselves.

Results: From 1850 patients, 265 (14.3%) were teenagers and accepted to be entered into the study. Among them, 175 (66 %) were female. The median [IQR] age was 17 [16, 19] (range; 13-19 years). Totally, 215 (81.1%) patients had deliberately poisoned themselves to attempt/ commit suicide, while recreational substance use and overdose was the cause of admission in 31 (11.7%). Sixty-one patients were opioid users (22.9%), 29 (10.9%) of whom were hidden users. Twelve were stimulant users (4.5%) with 10 (3.8%) of them being hidden users, 71 were sedative users (26.8%) with 45 of them being hidden users (17%), four were hallucinogen users (1.5%) all of whom were in fact hidden users, and 15 were alcohol users (5.6%). In total, 125 patients were detected to be substance users (47.2%), of whom, 45 (36%) were actually hidden users.

Conclusions: With regard to the high number of hidden users in each category of substance use involvement in teenaged patients, hidden substance use seems to be a huge health problem in Iranian teenagers at least in the patients who refer to the toxicological emergency department of our referral center. This needs suitable and instant intervention by public health policy makers.