Socio-demographic profile and pattern of substance abuse among patients presenting to a deaddiction centre in a teaching hospital of Punjab

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ABSTRACT

Background: The substances abuse has become one of the major public health problems of present society. Illicit drug use in India is quite serious, with a population of over 1 billion people, millions of victims of different kinds of drug abuse are estimated.

Objective: The study aimed to know the socio-demographic profile and pattern of substance abuse among patients presenting to a deaddiction centre in a teaching hospital of Punjab.

Materials and methods: A cross-sectional hospital based study was conducted from April 15, 2016 to June 15, 2016. Three hundred consecutive treatment seeking subjects, fulfilling American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - IV-TR criteria for substance-dependence were included in the study.

Results: Opioids were abused by 179 (59.67%) and alcohol by 87 (29%) of the patients. The age of initiation was below 27 years in 81.67% of the patients. As regards the reason behind initiation, improved sexual performance (25.33%) and peer pressure (25%) were two most important reasons cited.

Conclusion: Opioids were the most frequently abused substances followed by alcohol and has become one of the major public health problem of the society.

Key Words: Addiction, sociodemographic variables, drug initiation, relapse

Introduction

The substances abuse has become one of the major public health problems of present society. Recently there has been an increase in the incidence of substance abuse including that of opioids throughout the world. [1] According to world report-2013 published by United Nations office on drug and crime (UNODC), about 16.5 million, or 0.4% of world adult population (15-64 years of age), used illicit opioids in year 2011. [2] Illicit drug use in India is also quite serious, with a population of over 1 billion people; millions of victims of different kinds of drug abuse are estimated. Although opioid-dependence has become one of the most prevalent psychiatric illnesses during recent years, but very few studies have looked into the profiles of patients suffering from substance abuse in this part of the world. [3]

Geographical location of Punjab is such that the transit of drugs is possible across the state. Many reports in the regional newspapers have, of late, pointed at the widespread drug abuse in the state of Punjab. The proper assessment of the current trends and pattern of opioid abuse can be helpful in more effective intervention of this menace. [1] The present study aimed at determining the socio-demographic profile and pattern of opioid-dependence in patients attending the de-addiction centre in a teaching hospital in Jalandhar, Punjab.

Materials and Methods

A cross-sectional hospital based study was conducted at the Out-patient facility of the Department of Psychiatry, Punjab Institute of Medical Sciences, Jalandhar (Punjab), starting from April 15, 2016. Three hundred consecutive treatment seeking subjects, fulfilling American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders - IV-TR criteria for substance-dependence were included in the study. All the participants were required to sign an informed consent approved by the institutional ethical committee before being registered. All the patients included in the study were administered a self-structured Performa to elicit socio-demographic variables, details regarding the nature of substance abuse, questions regarding the reasons for initiation of abuse and reasons for relapse. The variables of data representing socio-demographic details,

pattern of substance abuse, reasons for initiation and relapse were presented as counts and percentages. Data was also represented in the form of bar graphs and pie charts, where appropriate.

Results

Of the 300 patients included in the study, 280(93.33%) were males while 20 (6.67%) were females. The average age of the sample was 29.20 years. The average age of the male patients was 29.84 years while it was 27.35 years for the female patients. The age range of the sample was 18 to 82 years. As many as 248 patients (82.67%) belonged to the age group 18-37 years. The corresponding figure for male patients was 235 (83.72%) while that for the female patients was 13(65.0%). (Fig.1, Table: 1) As for the socio-demographic variables other than age, 164 (54.67%) of the patients were married, 196 (65.33%) were Sikhs and 184(61.33%) belonged to the rural areas. 101(33.67%) patients were matriculate while another 92(30.67%) were educated upto secondary level. Only 41(13.67%) patients were educated upto graduation or higher. 88(29.33%) patients were farmers by occupation while another 85 (28.33%) were self-employed. (Table: 2)

Opioids were the most frequently abused substances seen in 179(59.67%) patients; 164 (58.57%) of males and 15(75.0%) of the females. This was followed by alcohol abused by 87(29%) of the study sample. The corresponding figure for male patients was 86 (30.71%). Cannabinoids were the least reported substance of abuse in both males and females. (Fig.2) 242(80.67%) patients reported abusing only one substance, out of which, 228 (81.43%) were male patients while 14 (70%) were female patients. For as many as 66(22%) patients, the present attempt was the first attempt to leave drugs. 99 (33.0%) had attempted giving up once before. 41 (13.67%) had more than three attempted prior to the inclusion in this study. (Fig. 3, Table: 4)

Patients included in the study were asked to give one most important reason for the initiation of substance abuse. Improved sexual performance was cited as a reason by 76

(25.33%) patients while another 75 (25%) cited peer pressure as the reason. Other reasons, in decreasing order of their frequency, were "loneliness" (seen in 11.33%), "to experience the kick" (seen in 10.67%). Other reasons included curiosity, availability of easy money, family stress, increased work capacity and breakup of a relationship (Fig. 4). All the patients were asked to give one reason for the relapse. 120 (51.28%) patients reported peer pressure as the reason. Poor sexual performance was the next most frequently cited reason for relapse, reported by 30 (12.82%) patients (Fig. 5). 99(33%) patients had attempted to leave the substance once before the present attempt while 66(22%) patients had no prior history of attempting to leave the substance (Table: 5). The age of initiation of substance abuse was 18 to 27 years in 210 (70%) and 28 to 37 years in 47 (15.67%) (Table: 6).
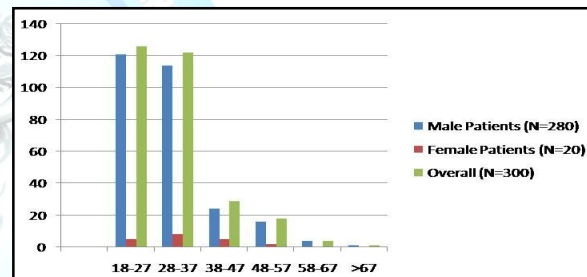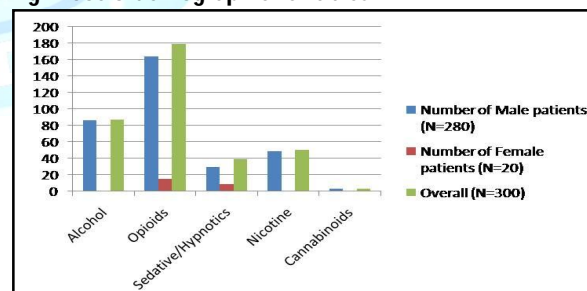

Fig. 1 Socio-demographic variables

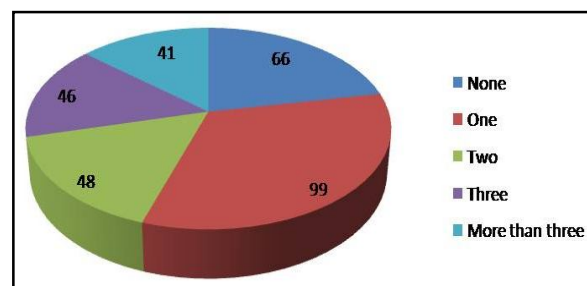**Fig. 2 Nature of substances abused**

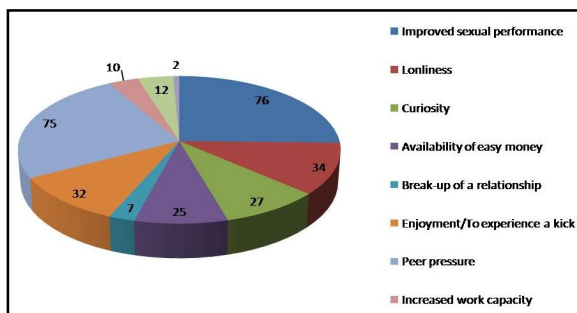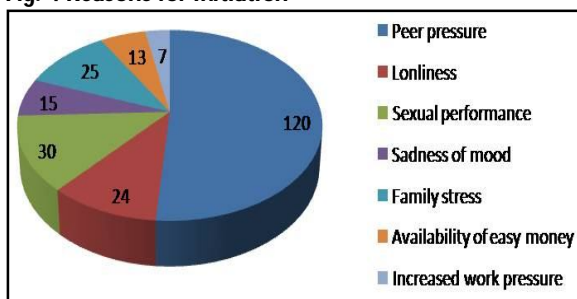**Fig. 3 Number of attempts to leave the substance**

Fig. 4 Reasons for initiation

Fig. 5 Reasons for relapse

Table: 1 Distribution of the sample with respect to the age

	Male (N=280)	Female (N=20)	Overall (N=300)
Average Age(years)	29.84	27.35	29.20
Age range(years)	18-82	20-55	18-82

Table: 2 Socio-demographic variables (n=300)

Marital status	
Married	164(54.67)
Unmarried	124(41.33)
Divorced	12(4.00)
Educational attainment	
Illiterate	9(3.00)
Primary	67(22.33)
Matriculate	101(33.67)
Secondary	92(30.67)
Graduate	33(11.00)
Post-graduate	8(2.67)
Religion	
Sikh	196(65.33)
Hindu	93(31.00)
Others	11(3.67)
Place of residence	
Rural	184(61.33)
Urban	116(38.67)

Table: 3 Occupation of abused (n=300)

Farmer	88(29.33)
Student	38(12.67)
Self-employed	85(28.33)
Government employee	21(7.00)
Professional	6(2.00)
Housewife	16(5.33)
Never employed	46(15.33)

Table: 4 Number of substances abused

	Male (N=280)	Female (N=20)	Overall (N=300)
One	228(81.43)	14(70.00)	242(80.67)
Two	26(9.29)	5(25.00)	31(10.33)
>2	26(9.29)	1(5.00)	27(9.00)

Table: 5 Number of attempts to leave the substance prior to this study

None	66(22.00)
One	99(33.00)
Two	48(16.00)
Three	46(15.33)
>3	41(13.67)

Table: 6 Age of initiation of substance abuse

Age	Male (N=280)	Female (N=20)	(N=300)
<18	33(11.78)	2(10.00)	35(11.67)
18-27	198(70.71)	12(60.00)	210(70.00)
28-37	41(14.64)	6(30.00)	47(15.67)
38-47	8(2.86)	0	8(2.67)
48-57	0	0	0
58-67	0	0	0
>67	0	0	0

Discussion

Opioids were the most frequently abused substances in our study, reported by 179 (59.67%) of the patients. This was followed by alcohol abuse which was reported by 87 (29%) of

the patients. This is in agreement with the earlier studies where the corresponding figure varies from 50 to 65%. [6, 7] Nicotine abuse was reported by only 16.67% of the patients in our study which is a very low figure compared to the findings of the earlier studies. [6] The age of initiation in our study was below 27 years in 81.67% of the patients. This is in agreement with the earlier studies. [6, 8, 9, 10] 80.67% of the patients in our study abused only one substance. This finding is not in agreement with earlier studies where poly-substance abuse has been found in 50 to 60% of the patients. [1, 10] As regards the reason behind initiation, improved sexual performance (25.33%) and peer pressure (25%) were the two most important reasons cited. Peer pressure has been cited as the reason for initiation in earlier studies as well [1, 6, 10, 11] though the percentage is much higher ranging from 50 to 96%. Improved sexual performance was cited as a reason for initiation by 25.33% of patients while poor sexual performance was cited as a reason for relapse by 12.82% of the patients in our study. Previous studies have found the prevalence of sexual dysfunction in opioid dependent patients to range from 53.3% to as high as 92%. [12, 13] Our study sample had 59.67% patients of opioid dependence. It may not be appropriate to compare these figures as our study sample consisted of patients diagnosed with any type of substance dependence. Never the less, prevalence of sexual dysfunction among patients suffering from opioid dependence, could be a subject for a future study. Ours was a mono-centric study conducted in a teaching hospital located in the urban area with a small sample size. The study did not elicit associated psychiatric morbidity. Our study did not include details regarding the route of administration and the quantity of the substance abused.

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