



PATTERN OF SUBSTANCE USE AMONG MEDICAL INTERNS IN TERTIARY HEALTH CARE CENTRE OF NORTH INDIA: A CROSSECTIONAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

A cross sectional study was conducted on 236 internship students in Department of Psychiatry, SMS Medical College. The study was intended to determine the prevalence, type and the pattern of substance use in medical interns. A self-designed semistructured questionnaire was used for the detailed interview after taking written informed consent from the students. Identity of the students were concealed. Data analysis was done using proportion and chi square test as statistical test. The lifetime prevalence of substance use was 74 % in our study. Males had significantly higher lifetime and past month prevalence of substance use than females. Alcohol was the most commonly used substance followed by smoking. High prevalence of substance use in medical students emerge out a crucial problem in medical students which require an exigent need for change in interns by experienced professionals.

KEYWORDS : substance use, medical interns, India

INTRODUCTION:

Substance use is a burning issue in youth today. Easy availability and increased vulnerability in students, due to peer pressure, cut throat competition and academic pressure had increased substance use in students. Moreover media also showed substance use as "cool" symbol which encouraged students for substance intake. The medical students are also not spared by the boom of substances. Medical interns are future doctors and medical profession is a noble profession idolised by the people. It came with its own privilege and responsibilities. Medical interns are future pioneers and decision makers of the health system. Use of substance in them may lead to inefficiency in their work conduct and personal life. There is scarcity of literature regarding use of substance in medical interns and understanding the graveness of substance use problem will help in finding steps to manage it. Thus we plan our study to determine the prevalence, type and pattern of substance use in medical interns.

MATERIAL AND METHODS:

Aims:

1. To study the prevalence of substance use in medical interns
2. To determine the type of substance and the pattern of substance use in medical interns.

METHODOLOGY:

A cross sectional study was conducted on 236 internship students in Department of Psychiatry, SMS Medical College. A self-developed semistructured questionnaire was used for the interview after taking written consent from the students. The questionnaire provides brief description of demographic data consisting of age, gender, religion, marital status, and locality. We include smoking, chewable tobacco, alcohol, cannabis, opioids, nonprescribed medications and more than 1 substance. The respondents were asked to tick the substance used by them in a multiple choice format. The respondents were also asked to describe the use of substance in never use, daily use, past month used and ever used. The questionnaire was provided to 250 students and we received 14 incompletely filled questionnaire. Thus the study incorporates 236 subjects for data analysis and subsequently analysis of data was done using proportion and chi square test as statistical test

RESULTS:

the study comprised of 150 males and 86 females. The mean

age of the students was 24.2 years. Mostly of them were unmarried and there was no significant difference in substance use between married and unmarried interns. No significant difference in substance intake was present for urban and rural locality .63.56% males and 36.64% females had used substance in their lifetime. Substance use was significantly higher in males than female interns (table 1)

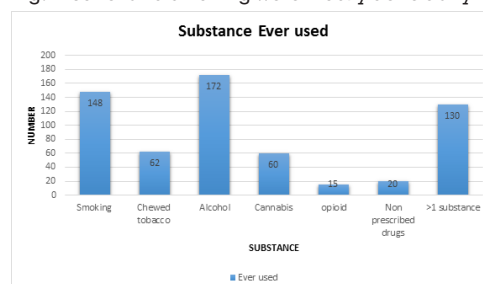
Table 1: Prevalence of substance use and its comparison in male and female interns

	Medical interns Number (%)	Substance use Number (%)	P value
Male	150(63.56)	136(45.34)	<0.05
Female	86(36.64)	39(90.64)	
total	236	175(74.15)	

Table 2: Distribution of users as per the type and pattern of substance abuse

Substance used	Ever used Number (%)	Past month Number (%)	Daily use Number (%)
Smoking	148(62.7)	106(44.91)	78(29.1)
Chewed tobacco	62(26.27)	26(11.01)	8(3.39)
Alcohol	172(72.83)	120(50.85)	82(34.75)
Cannabis	60(25.42)	125.08)	8(3.39)
opioid	15(6.36)	8(3.39)	2(0.85)
Non prescribed drugs	20(8.47)	12(5.08)	5(2.12)
> 1 substance	130(55.08)	92(38.97)	56(23.73)

Alcohol was most commonly used substance followed by smoking. Alcohol and smoking were mostly done daily



Graph 1: alcohol and smoking were commonest ever used substance followed by use of more than 1 substance.

DISCUSSION:

Our study depicted 74% lifetime prevalence of substance use in medical interns which is greater than other Indian studies.^(1,2) the prior Indian studies were conducted mostly in

medical UG students while our study population was internship students. Interns did not consider themselves students and are also financially independent. This may be the plausible explanation for greater prevalence of substance use in our study. We also showed significantly higher use of substances in male interns. Our outcome was in concordance to findings of previous literature.^[2, 4] Availability issues and stigmatisation of substance use in women may cater for this gender difference. Alcohol was the most common substance used followed by smoking. Gouri et al do not support our result^[2] while Dheeraj et al favoured our finding.^[3] Social drinking in medical profession may be the plausible explanation for it. Opioid use was the least common substance used by interns. Alcohol and smoking were most commonly used substance daily. More than one substance were used daily followed by smoking and alcohol. This high prevalence of substance use in interns should act as an eye opener for the medical fraternity as Medical interns are future doctors and use of substance by them had detrimental effect on their conduct and effectiveness.

CONCLUSION:

Substance use is an alarming problem in medical interns that require immediate addressal. Awareness sessions should be planned to describe risk factors and consequences of substance use. Counselling sessions should be conducted regularly to identify students needing help. Psychiatry consultation should be conducted in confidential environment to assess the underline causes for substance use in vulnerable students.

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