

Short communication

Predicting the initiation of substance abuse in Iranian adolescents

Asghar Mohammadpoorasl^{a,*}, Ali Fakhari^b, Fatemeh Rostami^c, Rezaghali Vahidi^a

^a School of Health & Nutrition, National Public Health Management Center (NPMC),
Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, Iran

^b School of Medicine, National Public Health Management Center (NPMC), Tabriz University of Medical Sciences, Iran

^c National Public Health Management Center (NPMC), Iran

Abstract

Limited information is available on adolescent's substance abuse in Iran. The aims of this study are to estimate incidence rate of substance abuse among the sample of 10-grade male students in Tabriz City (northwestern region of Iran), and to evaluate the associated factors.

Of all grade-10 male students in Tabriz, 1785 (13.7%) were randomly sampled, and were assessed twice. A self-administered questionnaire with 48 questions was distributed to students in February and March 2005. After one year (February and March 2006), another questionnaire with 10 items was distributed to those students to determine the incidence rate of substance abuse. The influence of different factors on substance abuse was evaluated with a logistic regression model.

The mean age of the subjects was 16.3 ± 0.87 (min. 15, max. 19) years. At the end of follow-up, 10.1% and 2.2% of students reported incidence of alcohol use and drug abuse respectively.

This study has shown low prevalence of substance abuse, but higher incidence rate of substance abuse.

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1. Introduction

Recently there has been increased attention focused on understanding the initiation and escalation of substance abuse among adolescents (Skara & Sussman, 2003). Part of the reason for increased attention on adolescent's substance abuse is that the period of peak risk for the onset of drug problems begins in

* Corresponding author. P.O. Box: 5166614711 Tabriz-I.R., Iran. Tel.: +98 411 3357580 4/290; fax: +98 411 3340634.
E-mail address: poorasl@yahoo.com (A. Mohammadpoorasl).

adolescence, period spanning the ages 10 to 20. During the early adolescent years, an individual experiences major biological, cognitive, social, and emotional changes that influence behavioral choices, such as experimentation with health-compromising substance including tobacco and alcohol, the gateway drugs that increase the likelihood of progression to more advanced forms of drug use (Kandel, Yamaguchi, & Chen, 1992). For a significant number of individuals, such risk taking behavior may lead to the formation of more enduring health behavior patterns including a lifetime development of drug dependence (DiClemente, Hansen, & Ponton, 1996). Thus, prevention of delaying the onset of drug use in early adolescence is of critical importance.

Adolescent substance abuse potentially holds a number of negative implications for the health and well-being of the individual, including increased risk for injury and death from interpersonal violence, motor vehicle accidents, and drowning (Miller, Lesting, & Smith, 2001), and increased probability of engaging in high risk sexual behaviors (Flisher, Ziervogel, & Charlton, 1996).

There is a limited amount of information available on adolescent's substance abuse in Iran. The results of one study (Ayatollahi, Mohammadpoorasl, & Rajaeefard, 2005) which was conducted on 10-grade students showed that 16.9% of students were experimenters and 2.5% of students were regular smokers. Furthermore the results of the recent study showed that 32% of students had experienced alcohol consumption and 2.1% of them had lifetime drug abuse.

Some researches have discussed that adolescent's substance abuse has a relation with several factors such as: the age of student, self-injury, and peer substance abuse (Best et al., 2000; Braithwaite, Robillard, Woodring, Stephens, & Arriola, 2001). But in Iran the relation of these variables with substance abuse is not clear. The aims of this paper are to estimate the incidence rate of substance abuse during one year among the sample of 10-grade male students in Tabriz City (northwestern region of Iran), and to evaluate the associated factors.

2. Methods and materials

Out of about 13,000, 10-grade students in Tabriz City 1785 students were selected by random proportional cluster sampling. During February and March 2005, a self-administrated questionnaire with 48 items was distributed to students during an hour session of their class. The questions aimed to obtain information on smoking, drug abuse, ever use of alcohol, self-injury, attitude toward smoking, general risk taking behavior, friends' smoking, as well as demographic information. After one year (February and March 2006), another questionnaire with 10 items was distributed to those students to determine the incidence rate of substance abuse.

In the beginning of the study, three measures were used to assess student's substance abuse. The first measure assessed whether the respondents had ever consumed alcoholic beverages and incidence of alcohol use during follow-up period (ever consumed alcohol coded as 1; never consumed alcohol coded as 0). The second measure combined respondent's lifetime use of illicit drugs. Any use of these substances was sufficient for that individual to be classified as having used drugs (coded as 1). No reported, use was classified as never having used drugs (coded as 0). Third, respondents were asked about their smoking status. In this study respondents were classified into three stages of the smoking continuum according to Kaplan, Springer, Stewart, and Stable (2001): 1. Never smoker: adolescent who has never tried cigarettes, not even a few puffs. 2. Experimenter: adolescent who indicated having tried or experimented with cigarette smoking, even a few puffs, but have smoked less than 100 cigarettes. 3. Regular smoker: adolescent who indicated smoking 100 cigarettes or more in a lifetime irrespective of current smoking status.

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