

## Trends in Drug Abuse

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### Summary

*An analysis of 1161 registered drug dependents in the Treatment Centre, Postgraduate Medical Institute, Lady Reading Hospital, Peshawar from January 1983 till the end of August 1985 is presented. Out of these 88% were heroin addicts while the remaining 12% were poly-drug abusers.*

### Extent and Magnitude

The Drug Addiction Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre in PGMI/LRH, Peshawar started functioning in 1982 with the help of Pakistan Narcotic Control Board and Green December Movement, a voluntary organisation for prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of narcotic addicts.

According to Pakistan Narcotic Control Board's "National Survey on Drug Abuse in Pakistan", 1983, at least 1.55% of the total population of Pakistan are regular drug abusers. The figure by the middle of 1985 is above this limit because of escalated heroin dependence. 2.6% of the total urban and 1.86% of the total rural population of NWFP including FATA are drug abusers. The number of heroin abusers in NWFP rose from 3358 in 1981 to more than 50,000 persons upto June 1985.

A total of 1161 registered addicts were treated in the Treatment Centre, PGMI/LRH, Peshawar between January 1983 and August 1985. An analysis of these cases is presented below :- (also see Table I).

DRUGS. Out of these 1161 drug dependants, 88% were heroin addicts, while the remaining 12% were poly-drug abusers using drugs such as alcohol, Mandrax, Amphetamine, Cannabis (by smoking) and Sosegan (by Injections). 69% out of

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TABLE I.

ANALYSIS OF 1161 REGISTERED ADDICTS TREATED IN DATC PGMI  
NO. OF HEROIN ADDICTS/DRUG ABUSERS IN NWFP

<u>HEROIN ADDICTS</u>		<u>DRUG ABUSERS</u>	
1981	3358	(Percentage of total NWFP population)	
1985	50000	Urban	2.6
		Rural	1.86
<u>DRUGS</u>		<u>GEOG. DISTRIBUTION</u>	
Heroin addicts	88%	Peshawar city	80.2%
Poly-drug abusers	12%	Rural areas	19.8%
<u>AGE</u>		<u>QUANTITY</u>	
Under 15 years	8%	Less than 2 grams	46%
15-21 years	57%	2 - 4 grams	50%
Over 21 years	35%	4 - 9 grams	4%
<u>SEX</u>		<u>EDUCATION</u>	
Male	99.2%	Literate	54%
Female	0.8%	Illiterate	46%
<u>PROFESSIONS AND JOBS</u>		<u>MOTIVES</u>	
Professionals	7%	For pleasure	70%
Skilled labourers and businessmen	49%	For tension	5%
University and college students	22.5%	For efficiency	11%
School students	1.5%	Without knowledge	4%
Unemployed	20%	For pain	5%
		For fun	5%
<u>OUTCOME OF TREATMENT</u>			
Abstinent	40%	(Those who refrained from drug abuse for six months)	
Relapses	40%		
Untraced	20%	(No follow up)	

heroin abusers smoked only heroin while 31% smoked heroin powder mixed with Cannabis.

**GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION.** 80.2% of total drug abusers were living in Peshawar City while 19.8% belonged to the rural areas.

**AGE GROUP.** 57% were between 15–21 years age, 35% over 21 years and 8% under 15 years. A typical heroin dependent was 21 years old. The youngest addict was 9 years old.

**QUANTITY.** 50% were taking 2–4 grams of heroin of 60% purity per day; 4% were using 4 to 9 grams per day; 46% used less than 2 grams per day. The most favoured route was smoking while snuffing and smoking by indigenous pipes were rare (4 patients).

**SEX DIFFERENCE.** The majority were men; 0.8% of the heroin smokers were working class nomadic women and one was an educated woman.

**EDUCATION.** 54% were literate having 7 years of education.

**PROFESSIONS AND JOB.** 7% were professionals, 49% skilled labourers and businessmen, 22.5% university and college students, 1.5% school going boys and 20% unemployed.

**INCOME AND EXPENSE.** The average monthly income was Rs. 1100/-. This was apart from family's support. The average expenses turned out to be Rs. 30 per day. Thus an average addict spent between 70–90% of his personal budget while consuming one fifth of the family budget.

**MOTIVES.** 7% of total drug addicts tried it in pursuit of pleasure (fashion), 5% wanted to get rid of their tensions, 11% wanted to increase their working efficiency (skilled labourers), 4% were given heroin mixed in cigarettes in parties without their knowledge, 5% took the drug for the relief of pain and 5% for fun.

**PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP AND WORKING EFFICIENCY.** There was considerable damage in this aspect. The relationship with their families and the marital life were severely affected: 35% had either left their jobs or were sacked. On the whole the attitude of management was cooperative in terms of treatment facilities.

**HEALTH.** Generalized weakness and loss of weight, anaemia and chest problems were marked in heroin and Cannabis smokers. The poly-drug abusers had other health hazards e.g. fractures, withdrawal fits, poor hygiene and poor nutrition. About 29 young heroin addicts, who were unemployed, sold their blood as donors. Their blood loss was significant. Three of them died in the hospital after succumbing to pneumonia and other infections. Another four were given ample blood

transfusions, proper nutrition and other relevant treatment and they remained in the hospital for a period of one month. Later two of them reverted to the same habit and were again admitted in the hospital in very poor health.

### **Results of Detoxification**

The mode of successful detoxification was on out-patient basis as well as in-patient care in the hospital with the active help of social workers' team and the support of a strong key member of the family. Two per cent of the patients left the treatment and ran away while 98% accepted the treatment. The average stay in the hospital was 15 days with a follow-up schedule designed for six months.

### **Treatment Modality**

Patients stopped the narcotics abruptly and were given substitution therapy with appropriate tranquilizers. Clonidine, an opiate agonist, was used successfully as detoxifying agent. During the process, supportive measures by the family members, doctors, social workers and religious leaders were given. In the hospital, some of the successfully detoxified and rehabilitated ex-addicts also gave support to the patients. The abstinence was estimated by close observation and urine examination of the patients in the attached Thin Layer Chromatography (TLC) laboratory.

### **Outcome of Treatment and Prognosis.**

As many as 40% remained abstinent for six months as per follow-up records. This was a high figure as compared with other centres in Pakistan where there was 24% success rate with only two months of follow-up (information by PNCB). 40% of the patients had a relapse within 2-3 months and most of them were detoxified for the second time. Their follow-up is still not complete. 20% addicts could not be traced after successful detoxification. The most important factors in the relapse are easy availability and persuasion by peers and drug pushers.

### **References**

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