

Substance Abuse in Students: A Recurring Challenge We Must Confront

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Dear Editor

Substance abuse including alcohol and illicit drugs are common among students due to peer pressure, experimental curiosity, and ignorance about the physical, psychological and social consequences that may interfere with their academic performance and reduce their chance of obtaining employment in the future.¹ Studies have found that substance abuse continues to increase among adolescents and even among primary school students globally which could lead to committing crimes, suicide attempts, violence, and unprotected sexual activity.²

There are many reasons why students even at a young age resort to substance abuse. High school is an era of permanent friendships, self-discovery, and a transition phase between childhood and adulthood. However, for many students, the burden of challenging expectations imposed on them by teachers, family members, other students, and even themselves occasionally worsens in school that can cause a tendency to substance abuse as a way to get rid of all types of stress, or to increase academic performance.³ They also frequently experience extraordinary levels of stress related to their family concerns, short-term memory loss, social life, decreased cognitive performance, poor academic performance, and getting behind on assignments. Consequently, they turn to substance abuse as a method of managing undesirable or negative feelings of tension or relaxing more easily in unpleasant social situations.⁴

Talking about substance abuse is difficult, especially if the students are resistant to listening. Many healthcare institutions are taking actions to prevent, manage or stop substance abuse, and enhance the students' recovery. Schools are ideal places to address the students' substance abuse by providing counseling and education sessions by trained professionals through behavioral interventions, crisis support, and cognitive-behavioral skills educations.⁵

In conclusion, providing education on healthy lifestyle such as promotion of sports enjoyment and eating habits to prevent overweight and obesity among adolescents as well as parental support are effective in improving the health of students. In addition, many evidence-based practices are necessary for school professionals who work with students with substance abuse problems.

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