



ALCOHOL AND HOOKAH: GROWING SUBSTANCE MISUSE

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Alcoholism and drug addiction are killer of mental and physical health. Alcoholic and drug addicts are killing themselves slowly.

- Dr. T.P. Chia

Abstract

This paper focuses on the problem of alcoholism and hookah smoking. The increasing substance abuse among youth is eating up their mental health and peace of mind. The decrease in the average age of consuming alcohol and smoking hookah is a growing concern. Alcohol consumption and Hookah smoking is very common among the youth nowadays, and is also seen as one for the rich. Both of which have deteriorating side effects on health of the person. Alcoholism not only impacts the physical and mental health of the person but also reduces the life expectancy of the person. In India the average of drinking is as low as 13 years. Smoking of hookah affects the lungs of the person, for the ones who smoke frequently their lungs are affected to such an extent that it can cause lung cancer, bronchitis, respiratory problems which can worsen with time. In India people as young as high school students smoke hookah to have fun, socialize and prove that they are financially well off. That's all the drugs and alcohol do, they cut off your emotions in the end

-Ringo Starr

Introduction

Alcoholism is a disease that is spreading rapidly in our country, especially among the youth. Stress is an emotion that every person

carries with him all the time and everywhere. Alcoholism is a common excuse used to get away with stress. The common misunderstanding among people is that alcohol consumption reduces stress and helps in coping with it. However, alcohol is a sedative and a depressant that affects the nervous system. Alcohol disrupts the balance of chemicals and processes in the brain, and depresses the part of the brain that is associated with inhibition. Thus, consumption of alcohol does not make a person stress free or ease pain it only temporarily depresses the nervous system which makes a person feel stress free. However, the sad part is that people in spite of knowing this consume alcohol as it temporarily eases their pain. Alcohol Substance Misuse can decrease the average life expectancy of a person. The average life expectancy for men with alcohol substance misuse is between 47 and 53 years. The average life expectancy for women with alcohol substance misuse is between 50 and 58 years.

Hookah Smoking is considered as a healthier option than cigarette smoking. However, hookah is much more harmful than cigarette, in fact hookah consumption exposes the smokers to high levels of carbon monoxide and smoke than cigarette. There is a common misconception that smoking hookah would filter out the toxic compounds and nicotine from tobacco when it is filtered through cool water. However, this misconception is not true. The toxicity level in the water-cooled smoke remains unchanged. Additionally, charcoal is required to heat the tobacco. Charcoal on the other hand contains some harmful chemicals such as metals, and other cancer-causing agents like polyaromatic hydrocarbons, which increases the potential



harm. Hookah smoke contains harmful toxins such as carbon monoxide, tar, arsenic, chromium, cobalt, cadmium, nickel, formaldehyde, acetaldehyde, lead, acrolein, polonium 210 (a radioactive isotope).

Alcoholism: A Substance Abuse

According to the Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2018 released by the World Health Organization (WHO) per capita alcohol consumption has increased two folds from 2005 to 2016. According to the report Indians consumed 2.4 litres of alcohol in 2005, which increased to 4.3 litres in 2010 and which further scaled up to 5.7 litres in 2016. The report further highlighted that 51.1 men per 100,000 population and 27.1 women per 100,000 population suffered from liver cirrhosis. Cancers associated with alcohol abuse resulted in 181 men per 100,000 population and 126.4 women per 100,000 population. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO stated that, 'Far too many people, their families and communities suffer the consequences of the harmful use of alcohol through violence, injuries, mental health problems and diseases such as cancer and stroke.'

India as a country has seen a rapid growth in city bars and night clubs in recent years. Alcohol has thus, become a lifestyle choice and a necessity for many, which has led to a fear of alcohol abuse not only among poorer classes but also in sections of society that were previously considered dry. Sale of alcohol has seen a growth rate of 8% in the past 3 years. Officially Indians are the lowest consumers of alcohol as per government records. As per government statistics 21% of adult men and 2% of women consume alcohol. The experts believe that there is a

rapid change in the pattern and trend of alcohol consumption in India. The major trend is that people are consuming alcohol at a very young age. The percentage of the drinking population under 21 years has increased from 2% to more than 14% in the past 15 years, according to studies in the southern state of Kerala by Alcohol and Drugs Information Centre India, a non-governmental organisation (NGO). The average age of drinking is as low as 13 years. The Alcohol Industry has introduced different kinds of flavoured alcoholic beverages in order to attract the non-drinking youth towards alcohol, thus, making them dependent on alcohol from a small age. One of the recent studies conducted in Karnataka found that women consumed similar amount of alcohol as men. What is of utmost concern is the pattern of alcohol consumption. Many people fall under the category of binge drinking or hazardous drinking. The two major barriers while formulating a national alcohol policy in India are, firstly, two-thirds of the alcohol consumed in India is either unrecorded or smuggled in to the country, secondly, there is woeful lack of data and research on its national health, social, and economic effect.

The main reason of domestic violence in several cases is alcohol addiction. According to the WHO study in 2004 a third of violent husbands' drink. Alcohol addiction is such that several poor people spend more than they earn on alcohol. A study conducted by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) in households of rural, urban, town, and slum populations of 28,500 people in and around the city of Bangalore and Karnataka, found that patients with alcohol addiction spend their average monthly salary on alcohol consumption.



Symptoms of Alcohol Abuse

- a) Temporary blackouts
- b) Short-term memory loss
- c) Slurred speech
- d) Difficulty in concentrating
- e) Risky behavior
- f) Poor decision-making ability
- g) A decrease in ability to control bodily movements
- h) Irritability and mood swings
- i) Making excuses for drinking
- j) Becoming isolated and distancing self from loved ones

Effects of Alcohol Abuse on Mental Health

a) Affects Brain Chemistry

The brain has a delicate balance of chemicals and processes. Alcohol is a depressant and thus it disrupts the balance which in turn affects our thoughts, feelings, actions and long-term mental health. Thus, the relaxed feeling that one experiences after drinking is due to the disturbances caused in the brain. Increase in alcohol consumption can lead negative emotions to take over, resulting in a negative impact on mental health. Alcohol can be linked to aggression.

b) Alcohol and Anxiety

Some feel relieved, less anxious and at ease when they drink. However, this feeling is short lived. The relaxed feeling is due to the chemical changes that takes place in the brain. Consuming alcohol in order to keep away from anxiety leads to greater dependence on alcohol. Feelings of anxiety can happen with a hangover. However, hangover can worsen the condition of people suffering from anxiety. Thus, over time in order to get rid of anxiety the person will have to increase the amount of alcohol consumption in order to ease the pain, which would in turn harm the mental health of the person.

c) Drinking and Depression

Binge drinking is associated with symptoms of depression. Alcohol affects the nerve-chemical systems in our bodies. These nerve-chemical systems affect the mood of the person. Studies have shown that binge drinking results in symptoms of depression.

d) Alcohol and Suicide

Alcohol consumption can lead to an imbalance in the chemical composition of the brain. As a result, the person might take extreme steps such as self-harm or suicide which it might not take in its senses. There is a strong connection between binge drinking and suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts. Extreme level of drinking (30 units per day for several weeks) can cause psychosis. Psychosis is a type of mental illness where hallucinations and delusions occur.

Effects of Alcohol Abuse on Physical Health

- a) Binge drinking can weaken the immune system, making the body a much easier target for diseases. Chronic drinkers are more likely to contract diseases such as tuberculosis and pneumonia.
- b) Alcohol causes pancreas to produce more toxins which leads to pancreatitis. Pancreatitis is the inflammation and swelling of the blood vessels in the pancreas that prevents proper digestion.
- c) Head and neck cancer
- d) Esophageal Cancer
- e) Liver Cancer
- f) Colorectal Cancer
- g) Ovarian Cancer
- h) Prostate Cancer
- i) Alcoholic hepatitis
- j) Fibrosis
- k) Cirrhosis
- l) Fatty Liver



- m) Cardiomyopathy (Stretching and drooping of heart muscle)
- n) Arrhythmias (Irregular heart beat)
- o) Stroke
- p) High blood pressure
- q) Epilepsy
- r) Anemia
- s) Dementia
- t) Seizures
- u) Depression
- v) Anxiety
- w) Infertility, and many more.

Smoking of Hookah: A Substance Abuse

The common misconception about hookah is that hookah smoking is much safer than cigarette smoking, since the tobacco smoke is filtered through water. However, this misconception is not true. An hour of hookah smoking is equal to smoking 40-400 cigarettes. According to research conducted by the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine one session of hookah smoking delivers 25 times the tar, 125 times the smoke, 2.5 times the nicotine, and 10 times the carbon monoxide. According to a report of the World Health Organization hookah smoking exposes the smokers to more smoke than cigarette smoking over period of time. Hookah and cigarettes contain nicotine. Nicotine is a chemical compound present in tobacco. When a person smokes tobacco in the form of hookah or cigarette it is absorbed through the wall lining of the small air sacs in the lungs. When smoked nicotine enters the brain and disrupts the functioning of the brain and activates receptors called the cholinergic receptors. Regular smoking leads to a change in the number of cholinergic receptors and to changes in their sensitivity to nicotine. This in turn leads to the development of nicotine tolerance. When this happens, the person becomes addictive to it and needs to consume

it daily maintain normal brain function. Experts believe that addiction to hookah has something more complex to it. The mix of chemicals in hookah tobacco can lead to more complicated addictive behaviours.

The hookah lounges have introduced flavoured hookah and promote it as tobacco free in order to attract the youth. In India hookah smoking is very much prevalent among high school students. Hookah smoking is considered as an inexpensive way of having fun and socializing. Thus, there is a rise of hookah lounges in the cities especially near the universities and schools to attract the students and youth.

Effects of Hookah Smoking on Health

- a) Sharing of hookah pipes can cause the spread of communicable diseases such as tuberculosis and hepatitis.
- b) The toxic components in the smoke can cause clogged arteries and heart diseases.
- c) The carcinogenic compounds in the smoke causes cancer such as lung cancer, oral cancer, bladder cancer, esophageal cancer, stomach cancer.
- d) Pregnant women who smoke frequently during their pregnancy are likely to transmit respiratory diseases to the new born. Also, children born may weigh less at birth.
- e) Hookah smoking increases blood pressure and heart rate which in turn increases the risk of heart attack and stroke.
- f) Smoking tobacco decreases the amount of oxygen that reaches the skin, resulting in premature aging.
- g) Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and Bronchitis.
- h) Shortness of breath
- i) Hyperglycemia
- j) Hypertension



- k) Abdominal Obesity
 l) Infertility
 m) Osteoporosis
 n) Asthma

Conclusion

Alcohol and Hookah Smoking are not only injurious to physical health but also to mental health. Drinking can never be a solution to beat stress or ease pain. Exercise and meditation should be practiced to reduce stress and anxiety. Hookah smoking is addictive and hazardous to health, the toxins and chemicals present in the smoke eat up your body internally over a period of time. Young adults and adolescents who do not have much knowledge of this smoke hookah from a very young age. Although hookah smoking is more dangerous and hazardous than cigarette smoking lack of knowledge of the potential dangers of the former among the youth is the main reason of them falling for hookah smoking in order to have fun and socialize. The way there are campaigns against cigarette smoking and awareness movements for it there are none such or very few for hookah smoking.

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