

Impact and relationship of drug abuse on health in Colombia

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The main goal of this study was to carry out a preliminary approach to the relationship between drug abuse and health problems. A questionnaire including 11 categories of diseases or syndromes (respiratory; skin; neurological; psychiatric; hepatic; autoimmune; cardiac; traumas and accidents; sexual transmission; genital-urinary; other) was presented to 101 drug users aged 15 to 64 and 50 non-users aged 20 to 84.

Four groups of disorders appeared as significantly different amongst the two groups: psychiatric, neurological, cardiac and respiratory difficulties were largely overrepresented among drug users. The main psychiatric troubles were panic attacks, excessive euphoria, general anxiety, motivational deficit, depression and hallucinations; the most frequent neurological problems were increased or decreased sensibility, memory loss and motor difficulties; only one cardiac (arrhythmias) and one respiratory (chronic coughing) problem were distinctively present among drug users.

The goals were satisfactorily reached, but two limitations have to be improved in future studies: the diagnoses were not medically certified in all cases, and the number of people involved was too small. Authors will offer the revised instrument and the suggestions for a sharper methodology to the Colombian Ministry of Health, and later on to other South American authorities.

This kind of study will create the basis for the calculation of relative risk, and in a later step, the attributional fractions drugs/health.