Volatile Substance Misuse Among High School Students in South America

Marya Hynes-Dowell [1], Pedro Mateu-Gelabert [2], Helena Maria Taunhauser Barros [3,4] and Jorge Delva [5]


This article summarizes data from a 2004 study of over 300,000 high school students (aged 13–18 years) in nine South American countries. A probabilistic sample targeted urban secondary schools, utilizing a self-administered questionnaire on prevalence and frequency of substance use. Multivariate analysis showed that volatile substances were the first or second most commonly reported substances used after alcohol and cigarettes in all countries (lifetime prevalence range: 2.67% [Paraguay] to 16.55% [Brazil]). Previous studies have highlighted volatile substance misuse among street children, whereas this study demonstrates that it is common among South American high school students.

Keywords high school students, volatile substance, inhalants, drug use, South America, loló, lança perfume

Substance Use & Misuse, 46:27–34, 2011