

Drug abuse in adolescence. Towards an education for prevention from a bioethical perspective

Abuso de drogas en la adolescencia. Hacia una educación para la prevención desde la mirada bioética

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Abstract:

The abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs and their consequences for health are an emerging problem that directly affects the adolescent population worldwide. This is considered to be due, among other factors, to a crisis of values, a consequence of a series of economic and cultural social political changes that are reflected in society; That is why we are looking for alternatives that improve quality, coverage of addiction services as well as actions that favor preventive care for healthy development based on a culture of values education. The latter, from its relationship with bioethics, is the emphasis on this article.

Keywords:

Abuse, drugs, values, education, bioethics

Resumen:

El abuso en el consumo de alcohol, tabaco y otras drogas y sus consecuencias para la salud son una problemática emergente que afecta directamente a la población adolescente a nivel mundial. Se considera que esto se debe, entre otros factores a una crisis de valores, consecuencia de una serie de cambios políticos sociales económicos y culturales que se ven reflejados en la sociedad; razón por la cual se buscan alternativas que mejoren la calidad, cobertura de los servicios en atención a la adicción así como las acciones que favorezcan la atención preventiva para el sano desarrollo basado en una cultura de la educación en valores. Ésta última, desde su relación con la bioética es en la que se hace énfasis en el presente artículo.

Palabras Clave:

Abuso, drogas, valores, educación, bioética

INTRODUCTION

The alcohol, tobacco and other drugs use show tendencies worldwide, national and local; as a consequence, the morbidity rates have increased in population. On the basis of the foregoing, it represents a problem for public health. Furthermore, they have a negative impact on the society and its development.

The statistics show the causes of morbidity by the Juvenile Integration Centers (JIC, 2018) show that across the world, the drug abuse has caused 200 thousand deaths per year.

According to the information from Costa and others (2009), the use of illegal drugs among the teenagers has increased,

the most commonly consumed substances worldwide are alcohol, tobacco, derived cannabis and cocaine.

It is known that in Mexico, approximately there are 210 million of people who used illegal drugs at least once for the last year, from which 4.8% of the population was from 15 to 64 years old. (World Health Organization, 2019).

Various studies done about drug consumption during the adolescence have revealed the serious and multiple consequences would be prompted such as physical, personal, health; therefore, it represents a social and educational impact.

Based on the following article emphasizes a marked deficiency of values and ethic behaviors needed for societies. In addition, it considers the necessity to educate about prevention as a proposal to focus on the issues

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mentioned. Besides considering the bioethical principles that are related to.

WHAT IS A DRUG?

World Health Organization (WHO, 2019) which by definition the term drug is “any substance which is taken into the body in any route of administration, altering in any way the central nervous system and might cause a physical, psychological dependence or both.

These changes also include alterations in behavior, emotions, sensations and people’s thoughts. All of them based on the type of drug that is consumed, the consumer’s personality, what it is expected to get as the effect of the drug, the place and the situation which it is consumed. The effects caused by the drug in the organism tend to be different in relation to the substance category, and they are classified in depressants, stimulants, and hallucinogens.

WHAT IS DRUG ADDICTION or DRUG DEPENDENCE?

According to the orientations of WHO, the dependence is defined as a set of cognitive, physiological and behavioral symptoms that show that a person has difficulty in controlling the psychoactive substance and he/ she continues using it, even though, it has adverse effects.

In Juvenile Integration Centers, drug addiction is defined as repeated consumption of drug that can lead to an urgent and inevitable need to continue using it without the consequences. (JIC, 2018).

It is focused on a significant change in the consumer’s character and behavior producing negative consequences in his/her mood, eating habits, sleep cycle, occupations, and reactions to situations when it is required to decisions making, among others.

According to different authors, drug dependence is considered as an illness because it affects directly to people’s physical and mental health to cause organ damage, worsen quality of life and limit development of personal and professional goals. It is also a social problem that originates a set of situations that not only affect the consumer but also the family, friends and the community that this person lives with. Furthermore, this addiction make healthy interpersonal relations difficult, some aspects such as respect, communication and trust. It also increases the risk of accidents and commits unlawful acts, among others.

This illness is characterized by showing tolerance, because the consumer requires the use of higher amounts of drugs to get the effects wanted and also there is a withdrawal syndrome which is understood as the set of symptoms that are showed after stopping using drugs or reducing the usual dose.

The difference among the use, the abuse and the substance abuse is based on the control that each person has to decide the frequency and the amount of consumption.

Adults can experience drug abuse when they have absence of a reference framework, conviction with regard to the meaning of life. However, during adolescence is a stage of huge biological, psychological and social changes which lead to drugs use and make it clear affecting diverse areas of human development.

WHEN DOES DRUG CONSUMPTION BECOME A MAJOR PROBLEM?

Drug use has taken hold of anyone as time passes, this situation has made problematic depending on diverse factors among which are:

- They type of drug used although it acts differently in each person’s organism, added to this, some substances cause damage more easily and quickly than others.
- The age of the person is taking into account, because when the person is younger, his/her body and mind are less prepared to stand harmful effects of certain substances.
- Level of acceptance in the consumption of substances depends on the context each person has.

Human beings depend on bio psychosocial aspects that is to say that the behaviors, thoughts and feelings subject to change on account of the context. It is relevant to say that when someone starts consuming drugs some areas can be affected in a different way. Because of that the development of a problematic consumption varies in relation to the person.

Young population rises quickly the abuse because they have high level of risk factors and low levels of protective factors.

WHICH PROBLEMS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH DRUG USE?

In accordance with Secretariat of Health, the issues associated with drug use have distinct implications. Corresponding to Secretariat of Health (2019) are the following:

- Health: over time the addiction damages significantly functioning in other organs and systems of the body, as well as physical appearance of the consumer, so it produces a negative impact on the state of health and quality of a person’s life.
- Social: the drug addicts are frequently involved on aggressions, public disorder and conflicts in the

street. Moreover they are victims of discrimination, different ways of marginalization and social rejection.

- Interpersonal relationships: when priority is given to the consumption of harmful substances, the person loses the interest in his/her relationships such as family, couple or friend's ones which causes obsession on destroying emotional relations.
- Motivational: as it was stated before, addict not only stops participating in social activities but also, he/she neglects his/her life project, goals and plans. It is less important personal development and making decisions in conflict situations turning to drug use as a way of solution.
- Familiares: está claro que una enfermedad tal como la dependencia a las drogas no solo afecta al consumidor, sino a las personas que están con él en su entorno inmediato, su familia. Resulta que en el intento de ayudar al adicto suelen presentarse problemas, discusiones y hasta violencia intrafamiliar.
- Family: it is clear that an illness such as drug dependence not only affects the consumer but also the people around him/her family. It turns out that during the attempt to support the addict, it emerges problems, discussions and family violence.
- Legal: On one hand, the use of illegal drugs, it is evident that the relation with drug trafficking represents a legal problem. On the other hand, the use of permitted drugs in the country there are also consequences for instance, driving while impaired, consequences of violent reactions or incapacity of control that some drugs can cause.
- Cognitive: the use of drugs become declined a person's cognitive ability may lose little by little abilities and competences of different nature, ability to acquire new knowledge and interest in learning.

STRATEGIES USED TO PREVENT DRUG USE DURING ADOLESCENCE

In accordance with the established by Fernández Hermida & Secades Villa (2010) prevention indicates a reference to the analysis, manipulation of risk factors and protection that affect emerge of pathology or disorder with the purpose of not to regenerate or to develop in a person, group or population.

BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL CHARACTERISTICS DURING ADOLESCENCE

Adolescence is a term that comes from the Latin verb *adolescere* which means grow or develop.

Adolescent derives from present participle that is active, this is "the one who is growing, in opposition to past, that corresponds to the adult person who has grown" (Adrián Serrano & Rangel Gascó, 2010).

Each stage of the human life has particular characteristics, in this case come into play bio psychosocial factors that influence on comprehensive development of the people. Adolescence is life time of a person who develops new abilities and competences. Apart from making possible a social life more complex. Then, the following set of biological, psychological and social factors will be checked.

Within the most important biological changes that are lived in this stage of life are:

A fast growth in height and weight will be done, changes in proportion, body shape and sexual maturity. It starts with an increased production of sexual hormones, hormone growth regulation and alterations in the body, hormone sexual release and growth. (Awuapara Flores & Valdivieso Vargas, 2013)

Psychosocial changes involved in teenagers' development referred to the following:

Changes undergone by teenagers offer growth opportunities not only in physical dimensions, but also considering cognitive and social competences, autonomy, self-esteem and intimacy.

The interest towards the body and the emotional aspects, change affective dependence, communication improves because there is a familiar influence and their peers in decision making.

Taking as a reference the biographical analysis, it is concluded that bio psychosocial characteristics determine in adolescence the following:

- Review and construction of their own personal identity.
- Magnitude in body changes that happen in the adolescence lead to the growth of interest and concern about the appearance.
- Review of self-concept and self-esteem.
- Establishment of vocational, professional, ideological and sexual commitments.
- Development of new ways of having an interpersonal and social relationship.
- Redefinition of family relationships.
- Broadening and deepening of relationships with their equals.
- Beginning of partner relationships.
- Spreading of social relationships.
- Development of high standards of judgment and moral reasoning.
- Possibility of experiencing behaviors which are characterized by adult life such as sexual relationships, working and professional experiences, etc.

In addition, it has been observed that in adolescence starts more often with the use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs.

This is due to specific characteristics of this stage of life, among those which are more related to the studied such as, the necessity to reaffirm the identity, the pursuit of independence, strong emotions, intense emotions as well as influence of friends and partners. Similarly, immaturity which characterizes the young people can create that momentary pleasure caused by the drugs would be more important aspect than that focused on the risk of consuming them. Another risk factor that indicates a reference is not to accept the experimental use, it might become as a harmful and hazardous habit because of the nature of addictive substances, as well as expectations about the consumption of these substances.

PREVENTION STRATEGIES

In this regard, drug abuse prevention during the adolescence is based on the protection against risk factors and habits that are developing dependence and stimulate the consumption. It is of great importance to support family and to put into practice education and information dissemination about dangers and prejudice related to drug or substance abuse.

Nowadays this issue is a demand for public health just as one of the main problems that affect Mexican society and International level.

According to the health and education organizations to international, national and local level, the strategy to increase attention to the abuse of drugs is based mainly on prevention, timely detection, treatment of use, abuse and dependence to psychoactive substances (Schiemper Junior, 2018)

In Mexico, prevention of addictions is linked directly with the strategy 2.4.1 of the National Development Plan (2019-2024), that means, increasing emotional factors to population using health services and prioritizing groups who live particularly vulnerable and marginalized situation.

Strategy 1 refers to do preventive holistic actions whose main purpose is to sensitize and to educate about the risks of consuming drugs.

Policies related to this strategy are looking:

- Reinforce information and awareness campaigns about the damages and risks of consuming psychoactive substances.
- Intensify preventive interventions directed mainly to boys, girls, teenagers, young people, teachers and parents to develop competences and healthy life styles in academic and familiar contexts.
- Encourage preventive interventions in community settings to prevent the use of psychoactive substances and foster the

development of healthy and secure communities.

- Promote preventive programs in public and private workplaces to decrease risks associated with the consumption of psychoactive substances and foster the development of safe and health workplace environments. (National Development Plan, 2019-2024).

In view of the foregoing, using investigation and action is necessary to encourage education activities in favor of the prevention. For which it is taken into account the development of values which is essential because is considered family structure and teenagers 'school development.

WHAT MAJOR ROLE PLAY VALUES IN DRUG USE?

Adolescence is an important transition period in which competences, abilities, attitudes and values are related to the effective decision making, it implies thinking in a productive and reflexive way and also evaluating different options available.

Values are enduring beliefs about how human being must and must not behave. In addition, it also refers to some objectives about human existence, in other words those purposes which are worth making the effort.

Juvenile Integration Centers defines values as "specific requirements of a way of behaving or a state socially preferable to the existence of a person. (JIC, 2018). Those determine the socially correct behavior in a way that they become as a basis of rules and regulations that govern society.

Ethically, right is something that looks for perseverance and development not its destruction. The man within the parameter of freedom has the necessity of being faithful to himself, to his nature, to his origin and his destiny, destiny which he has not created, instead it was given implicit. It is just the way things are, moral will consider right or wrong as criteria, based on what the man is and what he is destined to be .

Therefore, search of ethical is not wrong, the mistake or sin, instead right .It can be said that moral is a science of well-being and the way for achieving it.Values are part of this ethical dimension.

On the basis of addiction prevention, working as motivators of behavior is directed in accordance with the belief system of a specific social group, and because of that they predispose their behavior, put together and develop ideas, feelings, and attitudes of social groups taking into consideration ethical behavior.

This is developed during the first years of life by means of family and school. From this point of view, it is expected to have an acquisition of bases to guide their behavior in a rational, autonomous and responsible way. That is to say that teenagers learn to behave correctly according to the values, and whose main objective is to educate people with critical capacity to deal with the pressure of a social group, stereotypes and tendencies, keeping each on its own judgment and autonomy decision making.

Reviewing the most important literature about the topic, it is established that among the most desirable values of a person's character building are respect and responsibility. The value of respect focuses on the necessity to recognize and to meet particularly the needs without affecting others' integrity. It implies taking actions or failing to take actions once conditions, circumstances and own and others' rights are considered in order to not to harm or to cease to benefit from oneself or others.

For its part, responsibility represents a positive attribute that refers to know and to accept the consequences of an action or decision. Taking actions responsibly lead to a person make or accept decisions, at the same time considering the implications that these will have.

The praxis of values, let people to develop other abilities, whose main purpose is that the person will be able to analyze situations and contexts where he /she is. Taking into account a decision making rightly, also people might propose solving strategies that improve significantly the immediate environment.

Behaving based on values, implies an improvement of people's personal abilities, taking as a reference scientific information about how to prevent drug use is a key aspect for parents, mothers, teachers and agents involved to the development of people to be supportive of developing adolescent population and to expand protective factors when facing pressures of the environment and the offering of drugs.

Adolescents are viewed as one of the groups with higher risk to consume alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, because of physical, psychological and emotional changes specific of this stage of life.

Young people become a vulnerable population who are looking for living greater intensity in their experiences, added to this the facility to purchase drugs, also the mistaken belief about that experimental use do not have any consequence, they become risk factors that predispose a person toward using drugs.

There are multiple factors that determine the fact that a person uses drugs, it could be a mistaken belief that a drug is not harmful, pressure from friends, curiosity, an assumption that drugs may help forget problems or relieve distress, anxiety or pain that are present in everyday life.

The reasons can be numerous; however, the important aspect is to recognize that the consumption of drugs not only damage the organism but also has consequences in consumer's mind and his/her relationship with others.

Promoting values is indispensable to prevent addictions and is the task of all of us. It is necessary that adolescents learn to distinguish between right and wrong, all of this for their benefit and comprehensive development; even though, they are facing a difficult stage. It is well known that society needs upright and healthy young people able to face in an intelligent and efficient way current and future problems.

For that purpose is necessary that in first place, adolescents clarify their doubts and get the essential tools to face in the best way conflicting situations of their age. It is important that they consider accessing to the information that result in technology advances without forgetting the principles that allow progress and grow societies, because they are fundamental pillars of development, well-being and quality of life, values.

If the person feels loved, valued and respected, he/she will learn to love, to value and to respect the others and himself.

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