

AN UPSURGE IN DRUG ABUSE AMIDST THIS PANDEMIC

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BACKGROUND

The Date is 08-apr-21, today they found 1,15,000 active and positive cases in INDIA. It is now official that we as a nation are now riding on the 2nd Wave of this cursed Disease, and that number is going to increase Day by Day.

This pandemic is terrible enough for India, but reports have emerged of a revival in drug addiction cases as a result of mass unemployment and traumatic alienation brought about by the lockdowns. Drug trafficking in this nation has started to decline in recent years, though it had still been elevated in general. With the series of lockdowns which started approximately 1 year before, leading to the closure of places for men to work and thus idling a large chunk of the workforce, and soon they start migrating from Big and Metropolitan cities to their small towns and villages, this pretty huge home-coming event didn't affect everybody on a same gradual level, many reports from government and experts shows that Pandemic though create fear in these people but to tackle that peoples gradually took the hand of Deadly mistress i.e. DRUGS.

Also, People who are quite stable in their lives, see this pandemic as the end and they start Drinking to Death. If you remember a unique scenario of the past year, the Magnificent congregation which was to be seen, not on any ration or medical shop but only on Liquor shops all around the country. We also got evidence in favor of the psychological impact resulting in more suicides, spousal, and child abuse, due to the rise in alcohol and drug abuse during Lockdown.

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THE REAL PROBLEM

If you think you should treat one person by not providing what their mind and body want, think again. During the lockdown, the acute non-availability of alcohol caused people with alcohol dependence to go through withdrawals, which can lead to extreme cases of suicide as a result of the alleged frustration of not having access to alcohol., even black mark It demonstrates that if an individual becomes addicted to a substance or develops an alcohol dependence, it is very challenging to get them back on track.

“India has had a substance abuse problem for a major part of its history, but evidence shows COVID-19 is making it worse. In December 2020, it was reported that alcohol sales had risen 27% since March 18. If you believe that drug abuse cannot be compared to this pandemic, do scroll through India’s first-ever large-scale, nationwide survey of drug abuse, published in 2019 just before this pandemic caught India in its claws. The Magnitude of Substance Abuse in India’ report by AIIMS Delhi’s National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre has established that there are approximately 63 lakh people in the country addicted to Heroin (an opioid drug made from morphine, a natural substance taken from the seed pod of the various opium poppy plants grown in India) and 25 lakh to pharmaceutical opioids (Codeine, non-prescribed fentanyl, methamphetamine}. Other 50-lakh people are addicted to cannabis and 40 lakh to bhang (though they both are derived from the same plant).”

Let me remind you how severe the addiction crisis has been across the world: During the COVID-19 pandemic, government health authorities across the country are witnessing surges in drug overdose mortality, with more than 20 states reporting rises in opioid-related overdose fatalities, largely due to prescription heroin and its many other adulterated forms. Heroin comes in a variety of varieties, including a white or brown powder and a black oily drug called black tar heroin. Big H, horse, hell mud, Chitta, and smack are several of the street names. Drug misuse has also become a widespread global public health issue, with incidence rates ranging from 20% to 25% to people aged 12 and up. Following the lockdowns, the people of India, especially the poor and lower-middle classes, have experienced a period of anxiety and terror for their health and employment, and they have been compelled to live a lifestyle that has been a nightmare, requiring them to move miles within days and robbing them of their relationships. They are in a state that can easily be likened to living hell. People were searching for a path

back to their homes, a way out of that hell. This terrifying condition may have moved more individuals into deviant behavior related to illegal substance addiction, allowing drug traffickers to recruit potential clients to sell them the toxin that had polluted so many lives.

People with psychiatric problems were another population that suffered, and their symptoms could have deteriorated during the pandemic as a consequence of unwittingly mirroring other people's emotions. This group is vulnerable to opioid misuse when they are now on a soporific medication as a treatment (psychoactive prescription) for their mental state. They are likely to depend on medications for their day-to-day lives to feel healthier one day longer, leading to substance misuse, which has occurred and continues to occur during this Pandemic.

ARE WE DESTINED TO BE DOOMED?

No, unless and until we have followed the proper method to combat this danger, I will suggest no. This is a two-front war, and the government should recognize it as well. COVID-19 has a severe impact on people with mental wellbeing and alcohol use conditions, necessitating more resources. This has public health implications, including the possibility of opioid addiction, which is described as a neuropsychiatric condition marked by an erupting compulsion to continue using the drug while recognizing the risks. It is common knowledge that opioid addiction and its effects are a major public health issue for young people aged 12 to 24, with far-reaching consequences for society as a whole. Let me remind you that alcohol is the most widely consumed drug, with one of every three young people admitting to binge drinking. One of the more important medical pressures is alcoholism, whereas marijuana (Bhang, Weed, Hashish) is the second most commonly utilized medication and is often seen in casualties of several deadly car crashes, demonstrating the drug's more undesirable effects because, in this situation, the lives of multiple individuals are dependent on one individual. "Also, among first-time Drug users, about 25% of them use nonmedical psychotherapeutics{Iodex, Solution, Whitener}, 6% use inhalants{Petrol, Sanitizers}and 9% use hallucinogens{Lsd, meth, crack}, and the rest goes for Organic ones{Marijuana and Opium}. This contributes to morbidity and mortality in the population of young individuals with significant consequences." It includes changing their mindset towards extreme criminality and violence. These are some sad truths that the AIIMS report mentioned. Now the question arises on part of the government and its way of tackling this problem.

Any Government by seeing his country in this situation will try to control everything by heavy and brute policing, but we have seen the failure of The US and its War on Drugs. The supply chain of this network is like a Hydra; For every Head chopped off, it will grow two more. This is what happens in India, we got our THE NARCOTIC DRUGS AND PSYCHOTROPIC SUBSTANCES, ACT, 1985, the sole torch bearer in India in the name of Drug control laws. Despite the existence of this strict act which is not vague even on any Modern Drug, we see the controlled drugs in sizeable number making Indian addicted to them. The AIIMS report also mentions a shift in demand for psychoactive substances, that is happening at a very high pace, from traditional, low-potency, organic, plant-based products (opium, weed, Bhang) to more potent and chemically processed products (heroin, LSD {lysergic acid diethylamide}, etc.)

So, what should Indian government do at first, is to adopt a strategy like Country Portugal, they have decriminalized drug use and consumption, they make it licit and now Addict people are not been caught and put in jails for years, they are now properly counselled and provided mental health care support. This technique seems to be very effective in reducing the number of addicts and drug abusers inside their country.

Also, the government should focus on drug use disorders, not the mere use of the drug for recreational purposes as it's not much a problem as addiction and dependability are. In Indian society, Cannabis has been known to be used as a recreational drug from at least as early as 2000 BCE. Hence government should categorize all drugs on the problems and negative aspects they have and formulate their plan of action accordingly. Going after drugs like Weed and Hashish will be a waste of time and resources. As the AIIMS survey points out the King Pin of Drugs that is Opioids and new chemically manufactured drugs that are rolling on street, The report also points to the severe dearth of treatment facilities for drug abuse in the country and the need for regional strategies targeting particular geographical areas for prevention and treatment, as drug problem in Punjab may differ from Mizoram. One single national-level plan for such a country as diverse as India may not help to curb this problem.

WAY FORWARD

No one can go and reset their life from start, but everyone can start anytime and make a brand new ending. “The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of active cases and the death rate has been very severe in India compared to other countries in Europe and worldwide. The overall maintenance of the Indian health system due to the severe impact of covid-19 so far had been completely shaken and uprooted from its base.” The system has to completely evolve accordingly and as per the requirements needed to control this Pandemic. Thus, creating an unstable drug control and treatment situation. Pandemic impact on this clinical group as an all-clear. Close monitoring and development of the clinical and hospital sector got completely changed. And thus, hampering the resources needed for addicted persons to start a fresh life. The difficult Job-situation due to this pandemic and closure of the economy due to lockdowns and night curfew imposing now and then have a devastating effect on peoples suffering from Substance use Disorder, they are not getting proper treatment and psychological problems already existing resulted in a higher number of co-addictions. To put it another way, many individuals might be shifting to narcotics and drink to deal with the stress caused by a coronavirus. Using medications or alcohol to deal with stressful or boring situations in life may become a routine, leading to a substance use problem. Individuals may acquire a co-occurring opioid use condition as they use medications or alcohol to self-medicate to deal with symptoms of a mental health problem. When looking for an inpatient opioid and alcohol treatment program, keep in mind that co-occurring behavioral health problems are also prevalent in those who have a substance use problem.

Addiction treatment and rehabilitation programs are more critical than ever, as these facilities will assist people who are experiencing mental health issues. Many recovery groups have taken their meetings online, and facilities are also accessible on the internet, allowing people to access mental health therapy from the privacy of their own homes. Following COVID-19, the nation would undoubtedly need to focus on the millions of Indians who acquired drug use problems as a result of the pandemic. Many individuals have killed loved ones as a result of the pandemic's combined monster of HIV/AIDS and opioid addiction. The government should make an effort to minimize this amount by providing appropriate clinical and internet care services that would be effective in this case. Experts have already expressed their doubts about the COVID-19's secondary effects that India has yet to see. Specifically, due to the

burden of loneliness, lockdowns, unemployment creating boredom, and reduced access to treatment services, there is projected to be a surge in drug misuse during the pandemic and higher rates of addiction afterward. The sharp rises in alcohol sales across India are also preliminary proof of this result. The most pressing requirement is for access to alcohol care to remain stable, which should be stressed in light of the pandemic and the government's response.

