

LETTER TO EDITOR

DRUG DEPENDENCE (CANNABIS AND MORPHINE TYPE)

A 25 yr old medical student was hospitalized on 28 June 99 following a generalized tonic-clonic seizures. After immediate treatment in ICU he was referred for psychiatric evaluation.

Longitudinal history revealed that after joining Medical College in 1993 he experimented with cannabis in Feb 96 under peer pressure. Initially he would consume 1-2 cigarettes daily till Oct 96. However he decided to discontinue and remained abstinent till Jul - Aug 98. Thereafter he again resumed cannabis use under peer pressure. He started smoking 6-7 cigarettes daily for the next 2-3 months. During this period he also experimented with codeine in the form of tablets and syrup. But he discontinued as he did not find its effect to be pleasurable.

He failed in his final MBBS exam (Nov-Dec 98) and was introduced to intravenous pentazocine by a friend. This relaxed him temporarily and in the next two months he increased the injections to thrice daily. He admitted to have become habituated to the drug, but denied any unpleasurable withdrawal symptoms. By May 2000, he was injecting up to 7-8 ampules of pentazocine daily. His academic performance deteriorated and in Apr 99 he again failed to clear the final MBBS exam. After hospitalization the cadet was under observation in the psychiatric ward but absconded within three days stating that he was denied permission to ring up his parents. He indulged in drug abuse after absconding from the hospitals and went home where he stayed till mid Aug 99.

He rejoined college and was advised admission after preliminary examination (Oct 99) (During the period he was found to have puncture marks in the cubitus fossa and admitted to have taken pentazocine parentally). However, he again went home without permission and was brought back by his father in Dec 99. He claimed to have regained confidence to abstain and denied any craving.

There was no past history of seizures, STD, or head trauma. He was second of three brothers.

There was no family history of mental illness, drug abuse or alcohol dependence.

He joined Medical College voluntarily and had been an average student. He had been furid on a few occasions for absence from class/tutorial. He was detained during his second professional examination (Oct 96) for not securing the required mark in preliminary exam. He was two years behind his batch.

He claimed motivation for future studies; Denied any hetero or homosexual exposure. Admitted to consumption of alcohol on social occasions. Physical examination was normal. Psychiatric evaluation showed no evidence of psychosis or neurosis. He claimed to have regained self-confidence and motivation to abstain. Cognitive functions were normal. Biodrives were stable.

DISCUSSION

Prevalence of cannabis abuse has been reported to be high in medical students by several investigators (74% of all substance abusers: Sharma 1987; 94% in all substance abusers - Delhi School of Social Works Report, Wig and Verma 1977. Morphine abuse is equally high (25-50% - Verma and Wig 1977, 4.4% - Bhandra 1980) This case report should drag the interest of investigators to study the pattern of illicit drug use in medical colleges in India as well.

REFERENCE

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A.M. CHOUDHARY, Jr Resident (Psychiatry), AFMC, Pune.