

The initial motivation for substance use could be as simple as natural curiosity or more complex like peer pressure, the need to fit into a particular group and influence of negative role models like celebrities in the news. Adolescence is characterized by independence from parents and older adults and seeking close ties with peers and friends. This age range is also characterized by experimenting with new ideas, life styles, and making choices that not always prove to be right. According to various studies, children who have at least one parent or an older sibling who has problems with substance use is more likely to develop these symptoms themselves [2]. Unhappy family background and history of child abuse is very often observed with substance use. Breakdown of joint family system into nuclear families, rapid urbanization and the evolution of new social structures are also identified as some of the other causative factors. College campuses and hostels are an important point of initiation to substance use.

According to a study from India in 2013-15, comprising 446 children and adolescents who reported for de-addiction, majority were in the age group 16-19 years (95.7%), 49.5% were from urban areas and 50.5% patients were from rural areas. Out of these, 36.1% were employed, 24.4% were unemployed and 39.5% were students. The results showed more involvement of males as compared to females. As far as educational status is concerned, 47.5% had studied up to matriculation, 24% up to secondary school, and 5.4% were illiterate [3].

IAP – NEED FOR A PROACTIVE ROLE

It is clear from the above that adolescence is the entry point

for substance use. Hence, pediatricians of the future will definitely have an increasing role to play in dealing with this social evil. IAP Adolescent Chapter is propagating analytical and interventional tools to equip practicing pediatricians to appropriately understand and address the problem of substance use. Sensitive, enlightened and compassionate approach is required on the part of the clinician to deal with this. The chapter has also launched Mission Kishore Uday to ensure the well being of the youth of the country. This project includes addressing substance use as a major concern. One of the stumbling blocks is that substance use is a hugely neglected problem. There are very few specialized facilities to deal with it. The sheer complexity of the issue places it beyond the scope of clinical pediatrics. A collaborative approach might be needed involving all the stakeholders like pediatricians, parents, teachers, social workers, counselors and others.

In the years to come, we need to delve deeper into this topic as solving the problem of substance use will play a significant role in enhancing the general health of society.

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