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Rehabilitation and social integration of drug dependents: Issues and challenges

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In Indian context, plant products like raw opium, bhang, ganja and home-brewed alcohol were in use for more than 4000 years in traditional frame work and strong social control mechanism contain the problem. The drug scenario witnessed dramatic change from 1980s onwards. In last few decades, India became a transit point in movement of narcotic/psychotropic substances and the spill over phenomenon saw introduction of potent/alien substances in different segments of the population. The changing scenario and introduction of pharmaceutical products make the rehabilitation process a daunting task for health care and welfare agencies. The present paper focuses on the concept of rehabilitation and social integration of alcohol/drug dependents as well as modalities, applicability and sustainability in a developing society. The author while working with a premier medical Institute in the field of substance use disorder implemented cost effective community-based de-addiction programs among vulnerable groups. Based on experiential accounts of these programs over three decades many key issues emerged and are presented. The experiential accounts reflect that treatment should be geared to a continuum of care including withdrawals management, stabilization and long-term recovery-oriented program. The cost factor does not favor establishment of vertical costly rehabilitation/after care centers. In our context, community-based continuum of care through health, social services and economic development programs for vulnerable populations are needed. Efforts must be to encourage community initiatives like community-based rehabilitation centers, develop proper referral systems so that the rural population knows where to avail de-addiction services, establish vocational courses in de-addiction centers as part of the rehabilitation process and ensure effective coordination among various support providers such as Panchayats (local bodies), municipalities, social workers, hospitals or health centers, police, etc. to restore normal functioning among the substance abusers.

Biography

Hari Sharma is a Former Senior Research Officer in National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre of All India Institute of Medical Sciences in New Delhi, India.

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