

## **Promoting Informed Drug Use for Responsible Living among Individuals and Families: Challenges and Enhancement Options**

**Ozumba, C.O.**

University Medical Centre,  
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

### **Abstract**

Health is a key issue. Informed drug use is crucial to good health. it is also important for responsible living. It thus important to evolve ways of promoting informed drug use among individuals and families. This paper focuses on informed illicit drug use, informed prescription/over the counter (OTC) drug use. it further reviews the challenges to promoting informed drug use and ways of promoting informed drug use.

**Keywords:** Drug, Use, Prescription, Challenges, Information, Health

### **Introduction**

The world is today characterized by information overflow and free access to knowledge. There are no more grey areas and graphic details of every conceivable matter of interest are available at just at a mouse click. it becomes important to ensure that individuals and families are given the benefit of education about topical issues to arrive at a balanced view/opinion about them and to make informed decisions on what they consume including drugs.

Drugs can be seen as substances used to diagnose, prevent, treat, mitigate or cure illness. In today's parlance, these substances are referred to as medicines. drugs are chemical

substances, such as narcotics or hallucinogens, which affect the central nervous system, causing changes in behaviour and often addiction. The terms, drugs and medicines are used synonymously.

Making an informed decision implies that one has full knowledge of the facts about which he/she is to take decision and understands the risks inherent in taking that decision. In this way, individuals are expected to ensure that they get reliable information about every drug/medicine they are taking. This is a very important aspect of responsible living. The extent to which individuals do this remains questionable based on the various indiscriminate ways many

people seek health care, purchase and take drugs. Drug misuse is also a common phenomenon. The practices of patronizing chemist shops and self medication are equally common. Health is very important and informed drug plays crucial part in good health. This paper focuses on:

- informed illicit drug use
- informed prescription/over the counter (OTC) drug use
- challenges to promoting informed drug use
- ways of promoting informed drug use

#### **Informed illicit drug use**

Cultural norms in Nigeria preclude the freedom to choose to use illicit or 'hard' drugs. Traditional societies frown at it and the laws of the land prescribe stiff penalties for cultivating, buying/selling and using illicit drugs. these laws at variance with other climes where the focus is no longer on prevention only but risk reduction for illicit drug users. Fishbein and Middlestadt (1989) in their theory of reasoned action posited that the consequences of deciding to engage in behaviour (like the use of illicit drugs) are always considered before deciding to use them. they reason that decisions to engage in behaviour (such as illicit drug use) are influenced by the perceived consequences of the behaviour; the approval or disapproval of others; and the context of the situation. Therefore, one would not expect an individual to get involved in drug use if he views the

behaviour negatively and also knows that people he associates with have a negative view of drug use (Kubicek et al., 2001).

Education has a formative effect on the mind, character and abilities of people, teaches them how to think and act for themselves and encourages them to develop their informed opinions and to make their decisions. The content of the drug education needs to be tailored to the specific needs of particular people, taking into account their age, maturity, and risk of current or future drug use.

The aims of drug education include:

- To help increase the knowledge and general perception of drugs, drug use and related issues through the provision of information.
- to explore a range of attitudes towards drug use and drug policies and enable them to reach their informed views.
- To develop a range of skills to increase their confidence, abilities and skills to manage drug-related situations involving drug use.

Education about the illicit drugs should incorporate the following:

- Drug terminology including street language, appearance, possible effects and risks.
- Drug types: stimulants, depressants, hallucinogens.
- Different forms of drug use, including dependency and possible reasons for them.

- The impact of physical and mental health of people on drug use and effects.
- Signs and symptoms of drug abuse and drug addiction.

**Few Examples of illegally abused substances Include:**

Marijuana	Dope, ganja, grass, joint, bud, Mary Jane, pot, reefer, smoke, weed	smoked, swallowed
Fitrazepam	Date rape drug forget-me pill, Roche, roofies, roofinol, rope, rophies	swallowed, snorted
Inhalants	Solvents (paint thinners, gasoline, glues) etc	inhaled through nose or mouth
Cocaine	Cocaine hydrochloride: blow, bump, C, candy, Charlie, coke, crack, flake, rock, snow, toot	snorted, smoked, injected

Casa Colombia (2013)

**Informed Prescription/OTC Drug Use**

Over the counter (OTC) drugs are drugs that do not require the prescription and supervision of qualified medical personnel to obtain and/or use while prescription drugs written prescription to obtain. In Nigeria today, the line between to two is so blurred that it can be said to be non-existent. Since the general public has somewhat unlimited access to medicines, informed use of the said medicines is of utmost importance. Information is important because the dangers of misinformed medicines use are enormous and in many cases, life-threatening. the danger can be as a result of drug abuse/misuse (e.g. excess use of paracetamol found in our society today) or drug interactions.

Education that is necessary for the informed use of prescription drugs includes the following:

- The name of the medication
- What the medication is used for with specific references to the person in question (since there are various therapeutic indications for each medication). The doctor or pharmacist is available to educate one about every prescribed medicine and what the medicine is supposed to do in the body. if they fail to offer information, the person should endeavour to ask them for the information.
- *The right way to use the drug:* Every drug has a route of administration and dosage. The route of administration can be oral, intravenous, intramuscular, subcutaneous or any other route. Most take home drugs are taken orally. Advice from the pharmacist should include the right route of administration, dosage, the right

time to take the medicine and what to avoid when taking the drug to avoid interactions. An example is 'Take your oral drugs with water only and not fruit juices or soda'.

- *Drug interactions:* Engelbrecht and Shargel, (2010), noted that drug interaction is an adverse drug response produced by the administration of a drug or co-exposure of the drug with another substance, which modifies the patient's response to the drug. These interactions can be beneficial or harmful. Common examples include the following:
  - ❖ drug-drug interaction: levofloxacin and calcium tablets
  - ❖ drug-herbal interaction: *Warfarin* and *Ginkgo biloba*
  - ❖ Food-drug interaction: Grapefruit juice and nifedipine
  - ❖ Chemical-drug interaction: Alcohol and metronidazole
- *What the drug can do to the body (side effects):* Drugs have effects on the body but this should not make one stop taking the drug. The pharmacist on dispensing the drug should tell the individual about minor side effects she/he might experience as she/he takes the drug. The side effects might include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, constipation, sedation.
- *Other counseling points that may be person specific:* In addition to these, it would also be important to determine who prescribed the drug, and the source from which the individual obtained the drug.

Pharmacists are always available to give the society all they need to know about the drugs they are taking. This involves counseling.

### **Challenges to Promoting Informed Drug Use**

- Feeding of information from the social and electronic media. Enormous drug information is available via internet. This can sometimes pose challenges to the promotion of informed drug use.
- Peer pressure. Peer group pressure is a strong force, especially among the youths. This group can influence themselves in drug use.
- Socio-economic status. This can determine types of drugs an individual can afford to use.
- Legalisation of use of illicit drugs. This can regulate the drugs that could be accessed and those that are not readily accessible to individuals.

### **Ways of Enhancing Informed Drug Use**

*Manage the environment of your home:* Social and electronic media: Censor the social and electronic media (i.e. films, TV/cable programmes, the internet, chat rooms) available in the home should be ensured. A lot of information on drugs is flying around on these media. one needs to be literate enough about these media to get the right information to share with the people in his/her home and other environments. This way, they will not be misled.

*Dealing with peer group challenges:* Know the friends of your children and

other young people in your care. Talk to young people around you about drug abuse in a direct and sincere manner. Make these young people your friends so that they can lean on you when peer pressure to give into the wrong use of drugs becomes too high. When you have done all you can in educating them, ensure that they are kept busy in positive ways.

*Dealing with self-indication:* Resist the temptation of self-medicate or receive prescriptions from unqualified persons.

*Knowledge of name of drug:* Insist on knowing the name of every prescribed medicine. It is your right to know!

### Conclusion

Drugs are easily accessible in the society, whether they are illicit, prescribed or over the counter drugs. Education on the dangers of drug abuse, misuse and addiction is relevant to ensure responsible living. On receiving a prescription, responsible living involves getting informed about every drug that has been prescribed for the person's use.

### References

- American Heritage*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.
- Casa Colombia (2013) 'Commonly used illegally abused drugs' [Online]. Retrieved September 20, 2015 from <http://www.casacolumbia.org/addiction/commonly-used-illegal-drugs>
- Dictionary.com Unabridged (n.d) 'Drug' Available from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/drug> [November 1, 2015]
- Engelbrecht, A. and Shargel, L. (2010) 'Drug-Drug and Drug-Nutrient Interactions' In: *Comprehensive Pharmacy Review*, eds Shargel, L., Mutnick, A., Souney, P., and Swanson, L., Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Philadelphia, 7th edition, pp.421-437
- Fishbein M, Middlestadt S. (1989) 'Using the theory of reasoned action as a framework for understanding and changing AIDS-related behaviour' in: Mays V, Albee G, Schneider S Ed. *Primary Prevention of AIDS: Psychological Approaches*. Sage: Newbury Park, California
- Abadinsky, H. (2013). *Drug Use and Abuse: A Comprehensive Introduction 8th edition*. Cengage Learning, U.S.A., pp. 156-160
- Kipke M D, Weiss G, Dorey F, Ramirez M, Ritt-Olson A, Iverson E (2007) 'Club drug use in Los Angeles among young men who have sex with men'. *Substance Use and Misuse* 2007: 42 accessed @[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)
- Kubicek K, McDavitt B, Carpineto J, Weiss G, Iverson E F, and Kipke D (2007): 'Making informed decisions: How attitudes and perceptions affect club use among Young men who have sex with men'. *Journal of Drug Issues* 37(3): 643-674
- Sica DA (2006) Interaction of grapefruit juice and calcium channel blockers. *Am. J. Hypertens.* 19: 768-773 cited in Rodriguez-Fragoso, L. & Reyes-Esparanza (2013). 'Fruit Vegetable-Drug Interactions: Effects on Drug Metabolizing Enzymes and drug transporters. accessed at <http://www.intechopen.com/books/drug-discovery/fruit-vegetable-drug-interactions-effects-on-drug-metabolizing-enzymes-and-drug-transporters>.