

Prevention of Destructive Addictions in Higher Educational Institutions

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Abstract

Background/Objectives: It is necessary to focus maximum efforts on countermeasures against the proliferation of addictions destroying human personality. **Methods/Statistical analysis:** In world practice, there are several preventing models of destructive addictions and learning a healthy lifestyle, particularly health and education based models, as well as models that take into account social and personality factors. The article discusses the widespread model of positive prevention against destructive addictions. **Findings:** The conducted research in the area of addictions prevention allowed developing methodological bases of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of drug addiction and alcoholism. The author identified the risk factors contributing to narcotization, as well as factors ensuring the stability of human tolerance, formulated the goals of preventive activities, outlined the main directions and organizational principles when developing preventive programs, as well as proposed system of prevention technologies. The medico-psychological (psychotherapeutic), social and pedagogical technologies are distinguished in the field of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention. **Application/Improvements:** Interagency activity plan has been initiated in terms of participating in various research projects, practical implementation of scientific research, addressing issues of prevention system development in Russia.

Keywords: Destructive Addiction, Prevention, Higher Education Institutions

1. Introduction

The situation with destructive addictions, including those among students, remains one of the sharpest problems of modernity and represents a serious threat to public health and order as well as to state economy and security.

With the overall negative attitude towards drug addiction and its condemnation, personal drug use is excluded by just 20% of students, while the other part remains neutral. According to nationwide monitoring, the number of children and young people aged 11-24 years, using psychoactive substances with different frequency, reaches 3.5 - 4 million people, whereas the number of drug addicted persons among them amounts approximately to 1 million.

In this regard, educational institutions should be the organizing link in this system. Research and teaching community has the necessary experience and organizational capacity to develop and implement socially useful

practices in this area. In particular, in many regions of Russia, higher educational institutions represented by both teaching staff and students are already developing programs of social rehabilitation and resocialization of persons with various forms of addictions, as well as creating scientific-methodical base.

The works of many domestic scientists widely represent issues devoted to destructive addictions and their prevention, however, the problem of searching the ways and conditions to form healthy lifestyle of students, as well as to provide inter-institutional collaboration in the arrangement of work aimed at preventing destructive addictions, remains relevant.

2. Materials and Methods

The competence of health-saving is currently considered as a significant issue. This involves knowledge of and com-

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pliance with a healthy lifestyle, awareness of the dangers of smoking, alcoholism, drug addiction, AIDS, knowledge and observance of personal hygiene, and homeware, physical culture, freedom in lifestyle choice and responsibility, experience and willingness to implement this knowledge in everyday life, acceptance of health protection as a value, and regulation of psychosomatic and emotional symptoms of health status¹⁻².

In world practice there exist several models of prevention of destructive addictions and learning a healthy lifestyle, particularly health and education models, as well as models that take into account social and personality factors. Currently, the model of positive prevention of destructive addictions is widely used.

Drugs prevention system focuses not on pathology or the problem and its consequences but on health potential that protects human against problems, i.e. it is geared to develop and release the psychological resources of a personality, to support young man and help him in the fulfillment of his own life destiny³⁻¹¹.

In our view, social and socio-cultural measures, as well as psychological and pedagogical support and influence are paramount in preventive work with young people. These may include everything that is directed on the assertion of lifestyle, alternative to drug addiction, such as in particular, the formation of an attractive image of student's healthy lifestyle, development of communicative skills, creation of an favorable conditions (psychological trainings, festivals, debates, sports events etc.), formation of a positive self-image, consistency of aim and motivation, civic responsibility, self-esteem and empathy through the creation of an environment for joint activity of students, educators and administration of educational institution (student teams, student self-governance, volunteer movement, etc.)¹²⁻²³

When arranging primary preventive work among the students, the techniques of social (non-specific) prevention are used. This includes formation and development of extracurricular educational work, specific prevention, which implies the implementation of special comprehensive program (action plan). Many universities have developed and actively apply the programs on implementing of health-saving technologies and prevention of various types of addictions among the students.

However, often the administration of educational institution and teaching staff follow the path of least resistance, narrowing preventive activities down to the creation of directory displays and distribution of printed

matter of anti-drug content. The preventive effect of such measures is minimal, and in some cases incorrectly placed accents even bring significant harm.

3. Results and Discussion

Narcotization and alcoholization of Russian society has progressed since the collapse of the USSR and turned into a phenomenon threatening Russian statehood. Accompanying factors such as crime and disintegration of the family institution have the most negative impact on the demographic situation in the country and our gene pool.

Oftentimes we identify at universities the students with drug and alcohol addiction. Sometimes we are able to provide assistance to some of them - refer to therapy or assist in social rehabilitation. In the future they graduate from the university and successfully fulfill their potential in the profession. Some of them prefer not to remember by-gone tragedy, though there are those, who take part in social programs providing assistance, share their experience and take part in post-rehabilitation social patronage of persons who have refused from use of drug and alcohol.

The staff and students of our University explore the domestic experience of educational and awareness-building work with teenagers and youth that was successfully used during the Soviet period, showing mostly positive results of the social cohesion and solidarity in overcoming adverse effects in social life.

Cooperation with organizations and individuals in terms of searching for effective ideas and specific solutions to overcome the threat of drug addiction and alcoholism allows focusing efforts on fruitful and successful solution to this problem.

We also study foreign best practices including the direct sharing of experience. This work is being performed in the framework of meetings and discussions with specialists from integrated rehabilitation centers and other societal structures. Later this experience was successfully adopted and became an integral part of social and scientific projects of the University.

In this regard the following are the strategic objectives of the University community for the next few years:

- taking preventive measures by joining efforts of the University as well as state, municipal and social structures;

- providing assistance in treatment, social rehabilitation, resocialization of persons with various forms of destructive addictions;
- promotion of healthy lifestyle;
- scientific and methodological support of activities aimed at prevention of various addictions, resocialization of individuals, who passed comprehensive rehabilitation;
- training of human resource on the basis of voluntary initiatives in the framework of relevant social programs;

Preventive work in this direction should be carried out in close collaboration with youth and teen sports, cultural and educational organizations.

The staff and students of the Russian State Social University (RSSU) Branch in Dedovsk are participating in the youth initiative program “Socio-Legal Invasion” since 2002. The program aims at formation of civic consciousness, cultural and legal education and promotion of a healthy lifestyle. The program is implemented jointly with the Committee on Youth Policy of the Istrinsky (Moscow Region) Municipal District administration. The program aims at providing education and assistance to young people to form civic-minded attitude, promoting healthy lifestyles, social inclusion of adolescents and youth, and preventing of drug, alcohol and other addictions.

The factors, necessary for implementation of principles stated in the program include creation of conditions to provide available social, psychological and legal consulting services, enhance the education of youth through the creation of volunteer services for civic education in educational institutions and implementation of the “peer to peer” education system.

To this end, the Center for Social and Psychological Counseling and Common Use Resource Center were established at the RSSU Branch in Dedovsk.

The program had the following objectives:

- formation and training of coach groups out of the students of the RSSU Branch in Dedovsk;
- development and implementation of innovative forms of education and training of students, pupils of secondary schools and boarding schools;
- creation as well as scientific and methodological support of “Civic Initiative” volunteer services on the basis of educational institutions of the Istrinsky District in Moscow Region.

The following actual outcomes, achieved in the course of program implementation, are vivid indicators of its success:

- volunteering was implemented to increase the culture of adolescents and youth as well as to provide measures aimed at maintaining healthy lifestyle;
- sites for professional, social and cultural-creative self-realization were established;
- youth coaching groups were created to train volunteers, inclusive of former law breakers;
- drug-addicted persons were assisted in treatment and social rehabilitation.

At this stage the University is developing a new plan for drug and alcohol prevention and assistance in social rehabilitation of the individuals with destructive forms of addictions in the context of the state strategic objectives.

In this context it should be stressed a special role of educational institutions in addressing this problem. The effectiveness of this struggle, surely, depends on consolidating role of the state, effective cooperation of the government agencies and social communities with civil society institutions.

4. Conclusion

Research conducted in the area of drug prevention allowed us to develop methodological bases of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention of drug addiction and alcoholism. We have identified risk factors promoting the drug addiction, as well as factors ensuring the personality tolerance. Based on the research we have defined the problems of preventive activity, major lines, and organizational framework of drawing preventive programs, as well as developed drug prevention technology system. In the field of primary, secondary and tertiary prevention we emphasized both medical and psychological (psychotherapeutic) technologies, as well as social and pedagogical technologies.

Medical and psychological technologies provide action system for specialists aimed at the development of adaptive individual, able to effectively develop and overcome life obstacles and problems, while social and pedagogical technologies are associated with the competent provision of information, creating motivation to healthy lifestyle and, most importantly, formation of socially-supporting system (training of parents, educators

and peers in supporting behavior, creating a supportive climate in these micro-social systems).

On the basis of theoretical research, we have developed drug and alcohol prevention programs for children, adolescents and young people of different ages, as well as for their parents, teachers and peers. These programs are being piloted and implemented in schools and medical-psychological centers in various cities and regions of Russia. The programs have been comprehensively tested and currently are available at model sites where they are being used for several years, demonstrating their effectiveness.

Training of experts in the field of prevention among doctors, psychologists, teachers, social workers, youth liaison service employees, and young volunteers is one of the most important lines in prevention activity. In addition to the system-based training seminars, the scientific-practical model projects are implemented to establish drug and alcohol prevention in specific cities and regions. These projects provide a multi-stage training of local administration representatives, teachers, specialists, volunteers, youth leaders, as well as create coordination centers and promote their own prevention activity.

The multi-disciplinary nature of the problem on drug prevention promotes extensive development of inter-departmental activity both in terms of participation in various research projects, practical implementation of scientific research, and addressing the issues related to development of drug prevention system in Russia. Special interdepartmental expert council on prevention issues, established under the Ministry of Education of the Russian Federation, also contributes to the main goal.

Currently, prevention of drug addiction in Russia is not just ineffective attempt to inform young people about drugs and their consequences, though has clearly articulated goals, objectives and action strategy constituting a system of scientific knowledge.

The research in the area of drug prevention must be continued. It is necessary to develop general theoretical concept and its special aspects such as study of the role of family and educational institutions in prevention of drug use, and the reasons of risk group formation. It is necessary to develop appropriate preventive and therapeutic programs and to continue drawing and testing the programs for children of different age groups, street and homeless children, as well as to develop training methodologies and methods for different kinds of specialists in the field of drug prevention.

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