

Drug Effects

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Security Guards may encounter individuals under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Recognizing the signs of substance abuse and understanding the effects of various drugs on human behavior (e.g., a suspect experiencing withdrawal) is crucial for handling these situations safely for both the guard and the individual.

ADDICTIONS

Addictions can evolve into mental illnesses when an individual's craving for a substance or pleasurable activity becomes uncontrollable. This overwhelming need prevents them from leading a normal life, leading to a lack of mental stability even if there is no obvious physical harm. Two types of addictions are discussed in detail below.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

While alcohol is a drug, it is discussed separately here due to its unique characteristics compared to other drugs. Addiction to alcohol, or alcoholism, shares some traits with drug addiction but is notably widespread. Both legal and illegal drugs pose significant dangers in Canada, with abuse and addiction being growing concerns in modern society.

Laxatives and Weight Loss Medications

The interaction between drugs and psychological addictions is also significant. Individuals with eating disorders like Bulimia or Anorexia may use drugs to purge food or aid in weight loss. This is especially common among young people, particularly high school and college-aged girls. Security personnel should be aware of the signs and prevalence of laxative abuse and weight loss pills, especially in places frequented by youth.

Alcoholism

Alcohol addiction often starts with heavy drinking to relieve personal, business, or social stress. This temporary relief, despite causing occasional hangovers, can lead to habitual drinking whenever stress is felt. When drinking becomes necessary to feel normal, it indicates a severe illness that disrupts personal and professional life and requires immediate treatment.

The progression to alcoholism varies among individuals, influenced by their physical tolerance for alcohol. Some people transition slowly over years, while others may become addicted rapidly. Drinking patterns also differ: some binge drink with periods of sobriety, others drink constantly, and preferences for types of alcohol vary. Despite these differences, early-stage alcoholics typically tolerate larger amounts of alcohol without noticeable symptoms than they do in later stages.

Alcoholism is a disease requiring medical treatment and is often seen in individuals who have not fully developed emotionally. Numerous treatment centers and organizations like Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.) provide valuable support.

Handling Intoxicated Individuals

As a Security Guard, handling intoxicated individuals requires thoughtful, understanding, and careful approaches. While no universal rules apply to every situation, using mature judgment and sensible application of knowledge ensures proper handling. The methods for dealing with intoxicated persons are similar to those for disturbed or depressed individuals.

Alcohol Poisoning

Alcohol and other ethanol-based liquids are central nervous system depressants. Overconsumption can lead to dangerously high blood alcohol levels, causing immediate and severe effects influenced by metabolic rate, weight, eating habits, and hydration levels. Serious medical issues or even death can result from accidents due to coordination problems, asphyxiation from vomiting, and loss of muscle control.

Drug Addiction

People start taking drugs either due to medical prescriptions for physical or mental disorders or for the pleasurable effects they produce, such as the drowsiness from heroin or alertness from caffeine. The addictiveness of a drug varies significantly among individuals. Mildly addictive drugs like codeine and recreational drugs like cannabis (marijuana) or cocaine are commonly referred to as "soft" or "hard" drugs.

Addiction to hard drugs requires increasing doses to maintain the drug's effects and to avoid physical and emotional breakdown, a process known as building tolerance. Without the drug, addicts experience withdrawal symptoms, which can be severe or fatal, necessitating medical supervision during withdrawal.

Legal Consequences

The law imposes severe penalties for the illegal use, possession, or sale of drugs. These laws aim to prevent habituation, tolerance, and dependence, which can lead to severe addiction.

Definitions:

- **Habituation:** Mental dependence on a drug, where a person believes they cannot function without it, although no physical symptoms occur when the drug is unavailable.
- **Tolerance:** The need for larger amounts of a drug to achieve the same effect.
- **Dependence:** A state where the body becomes so reliant on a drug that withdrawal causes severe physical and psychological symptoms, and in extreme cases, can be fatal.

Handling individuals under the influence of drugs involves approaches similar to those used for disturbed or depressed individuals, recognizing that drug users, like alcoholics, suffer from both mental and physical illnesses.

Drugs and Their Effects

A drug is defined as any non-nutritional chemical substance that can be absorbed into the body. The term "drug" is commonly used to refer to either a medicine or a substance taken voluntarily (typically by inhalation, injection, or skin absorption) to produce a temporary effect. Sometimes these categories overlap; for example, morphine may be prescribed as a pain reliever but also gives a temporary sense of well-being when self-administered by a healthy person. Some drugs, including morphine and nicotine, are addictive and can harm individuals.

There are three main categories of drugs that security personnel commonly encounter: Narcotic Drugs, Psychotropic Drugs, and Inhalants and Alternative Substances.

Narcotic Substances

Narcotic drugs include several types of illicit substances with particularly addictive qualities, posing a significant risk of abuse. This category includes, but is not limited to, cannabis and its derivatives, cocaine, heroin, methadone, morphine, and opium. It also includes substances typically used for medical purposes that may have addictive properties and a high potential for abuse, such as codeine, dihydrocodeine, and propiram (opioid analgesics).

Psychotropic Substances

Psychotropic substances pose a high risk of abuse and present a serious threat to public health, with very little or no therapeutic value. These dangerous drugs include LSD, MDMA, mescaline, psilocybin, tetrahydrocannabinol, amphetamines and amphetamine-type stimulants, and barbiturates like amobarbital. It also includes tranquilizers, analgesics, and narcotics such as allobarbitol, diazepam, lorazepam, phenobarbital, and temazepam. Alcohol can also be considered a psychotropic drug due to its psychoactive effects on the user.

Inhalants and Alternative Substances

This category includes both psychotropic and narcotic substances obtained through alternative means. People using inhalants and other alternative substances to become intoxicated often lack access to other drugs or alcohol, such as children, teenagers, incarcerated individuals, and marginalized persons. Inhalants are substances that emit poisonous vapors, such as organic solvents (cleaning products, adhesives, nail polish removers), fuels, and medical gases like nitrous oxide. Many common aerosol products contain substances with psychotropic and narcotic effects that can be abused. Inhalant users typically inhale vapor or aerosol propellant gases using plastic bags, solvent-soaked rags, or open containers. The effects include alcohol-like intoxication and hallucinations and can lead to serious medical issues such as hypoxia,

pneumonia, and cardiovascular problems due to improper dosage and potency not meant for human consumption. Other consumables containing ethanol-based liquids and stimulant decongestants can also be ingested to achieve intoxication.

Here is a list of commonly found products associated with intoxication:

- Mouthwash
- Rubbing Alcohol
- Hand Sanitizers
- Cooking Wines
- Paint Thinners
- Aerosol-Based Paints
- Industrial Adhesives and Glues
- Dimenhydrinate (anti-nauseates)
- Pseudoephedrine Hydrochloride (decongestant)

Security personnel need to be aware of these substances and their effects to handle situations involving drug abuse effectively and safely.

MDMA / Ecstasy

MDMA, commonly known as Ecstasy, is typically consumed orally in tablet or capsule form. The effects of MDMA generally begin to manifest within 30-45 minutes of ingestion and can last between 3 to 6 hours. MDMA increases heart rate and blood pressure and creates a sense of alertness similar to amphetamine use. However, these stimulant effects can also lead to severe dehydration, hypertension, and potential heart or kidney failure. Psychological effects of MDMA include confusion, depression, sleep disturbances, intense drug cravings, severe anxiety, and paranoia, which can persist during and even weeks after use. Physical symptoms of MDMA use include muscle tension, involuntary teeth clenching, nausea, blurred vision, rapid eye movement, faintness, chills, or excessive sweating.

High doses of MDMA can be extremely dangerous, causing a significant rise in body temperature (malignant hyperthermia) that may lead to muscle breakdown, kidney failure, and cardiovascular system collapse, potentially resulting in fatal outcomes at raves. Additionally, MDMA use can trigger heart attacks, strokes, and seizures. Signs of an MDMA overdose include:

- Feeling excessively hot or unwell
- Confusion and difficulty speaking
- Headache
- Vomiting
- Lack of sweating
- Racing heart or pulse at rest
- Fainting or collapsing

- Loss of control over body movements
- Tremors
- Difficulty urinating
- High blood pressure
- Muscle cramping
- Seizures
- Panic attacks
- Loss of consciousness
- Permanent brain damage
- Death

Cocaine

Cocaine overdose symptoms are intense but typically short-lived. Although rare, fatal cocaine overdoses do occur. The lethal dose of cocaine varies depending on factors like weight, metabolism, and the individual's overall health. Cocaine is often "cut" with other substances such as baby powder or lactose, increasing the risk of overdose due to the unpredictable purity of the drug. An overdose can cause a severe increase in blood pressure, potentially leading to bleeding in the brain and a heightened risk of stroke. Cocaine overdoses can also cause heart and respiratory problems, resulting in death.

Paraphernalia

Drug use often involves various tools and items that can pose risks to security personnel. Common paraphernalia found on sites include syringes, metal pipes, heavy-duty lighters, and tin foil. These items can be hazardous, potentially poisoning or injuring guards or others who come into contact with them. Guards should exercise caution and vigilance when encountering such items during their duties.

Treatment Information

If you encounter someone overdosing on drugs or alcohol, and they start experiencing a bad trip or exhibit nervousness, anxiety, or panic, move them to a quieter area away from bright lights and noise. Sit with them, provide reassurance, and try to calm them down. If their condition worsens, seek additional help. Immediate first aid treatment is essential in overdose situations. Follow these steps:

1. Call for paramedics.
2. Notify your supervisor for assistance.
3. Ensure the area around the victim is clear of people and has adequate ventilation.
4. Attempt to determine what drug(s) the victim has taken, the time of consumption, and the quantity. Speak with any friends or family on site.
5. Check if the victim has any existing medical conditions or allergies to medication.
6. Obtain contact information for their next of kin or immediate family.

Administer First Aid/CPR as needed and try to stabilize the victim until paramedics arrive. Assist paramedics upon their arrival as required.