Drug abuse alarmingly rising in Bangladesh

Addicts spend Tk 70m for illegal narcotics per day

**Bss, Dhaka**

Wed Aug 14, 2013 12:24 AM Last update on: Wed Aug 14, 2013 03:38 AM

In recent years, drug addiction has significantly increased in the whole world, especially in the South Asian countries like Bangladesh. In this country, this agent of human devastation has spread its tentacles to every nook and corner. International organisations like the United Nations and World Health Organization (WHO) are alarmed by the present proportion of addicts.

According to sources at different healthcare facilities, nowadays nearly 10 percent of outpatients are visiting the country's hospitals with cases of addiction-related complications involving heroin, marijuana and Phensedyl. The trend of drug consumption is higher in youth and teenagers, their age spanning between 15 and 30 years. They come from all strata of the society.

The average age of the drug addicts is 22. Students are mostly falling victims to drug abuse, which eventually lowers their standards of education and attendance at schools and colleges.  
The WHO defines drug as a chemical substance of synthetic, semi-synthetic or natural origin intended for diagnostic, therapeutic or palliative use or for modifying physiological functions of man and animal.  
There are a number of reasons why a teenager might try drugs.  
Peer pressure is one of the leading causes. Reasons determined through research include curiosity and excitement through its use, despair and frustration for continuous failure in works or economic insolvency. Some get addicted because they try to follow the western culture of drug abuse and enjoyment of life. A number of other reasons include poverty, easy access to drugs, dejection in love, and mental stress due to family problems.

There are three types of drugs available in Bangladesh--opium (like heroin), cannabis (ganja), and sleeping pills (seduxen). The most common drugs used in Bangladesh are stimulants. The teens are ignorant about variation of drugs. Some of them cannot tell the difference between stimulants and marijuana. There are a large number of young using drugs.

According to police, "In the last two or three years, many more teens have been arrested for using drugs than ever before."  
Though it is not possible to find out the exact number of the drug users in the country, on the basis of different data and statistics, it is estimated that the number of addicts in Bangladesh is more than six million who spend over Tk 70 million every day on illegal narcotics, say studies and intelligence reports.

According to a WHO survey, most drug users are young, their age ranging from 18 to 30 years. Meanwhile, a separate study conducted by the Journal of Health, Population and Nutrition (JHPN) of the International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (ICDDR,B) shows that in the capital, 79.4 percent of the users are male and 20.6 percent are female.

The JHPN study finds that 64.8 percent of the drug users in the country are unmarried, 56.1 percent are either students or unemployed, and 95.4 percent are smokers. About 85.7 percent get into consuming drugs under the influence of friends, while 65.8 percent get addicted to various codeine-laced cough syrups.

More than 1 lakh people are directly involved in illegal drug trade and supply. The study reveals that peddlers prefer women and children for carrying and selling drugs because it is easier for them to evade law enforcers.

According to intelligence sources at the Department of Narcotics Control (DNC), heroin is the deadliest of drugs in Bangladesh. In recent times, Yaba has gained popularity and has become a "fashionable" drug. Cough syrup Phensedyl remains the most popular among the masses because of its low price and easy availability.  
Sources at the DNC intelligence wing also said that around 10,000 cases are filed and 9,000 people are arrested every year in connection with drug-related violence and crimes.

Physicians say weaning someone off drug addiction is difficult, but not impossible. Support from family and friends, professional help from doctors, and will power of the patient during inpatient or outpatient drug addiction treatment may help to end dependence on drugs.