

Cell Biology and Public Health (Field Work)
Heroin Addiction

Patient 1 (28 Years old)

When did you first start doing heroin?

10 years ago, I'd smoke cigarettes with my friends, when the cigarettes stopped hitting we started putting hash in them, and when the hash stopped hitting, one friend suggested to smoke heroin and that's when I started.

Have you done any other drugs?

Just hash and heroin

Why did you decide to get treatment?

One day I decided to stop out of my own will

What do you think of the treatment program offered here?

I like that aside from just helping us with withdrawal, we also have classes in the morning that educate us

Is there anything you feel the government or ANF should be doing differently to help addicts?

No

Patient 2 (32 Years old)

When did you first start doing heroin?

When I was 23 years old. I started it through my friends.

Have you done any other drugs?

I've also done alcohol and hash and crystal (meth)

Why did you decide to get treatment?

I was feeling pain about my habits and decided to come here

What do you think of the treatment program offered here?

My favorite part is also the lectures. We are taught how to stay away from these things and how to get back into society.

Is there anything you feel the government or ANF should be doing differently to help addicts?

No everything is perfect, the lectures are really nice.

Patient 3 (40 years old)

When did you first start doing heroin?

When I was 21

Have you done any other drugs?

Heroin and alcohol and crystal

Why did you decide to get treatment?

I used to run a business, and as my problem got worse, it started affecting my business and my wife and children too so I decided on my own that it was time to get help

What do you think of the treatment program offered here?

I like that there is a lot of discipline, the doctors are very nice they give us medicines and again as he said the lectures are a big part of the treatment process.

Is there anything you feel the government or ANF should be doing differently to help addicts?

I am completely satisfied.

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Heroin Addiction

What do you think are the causes of heroin addiction?

- Peer pressure
- Stress, relationship problems etc
- Curiosity

How common is heroin addiction?

We get 200 new patients every week, and we only have capacity for 105. It's a huge problem that people don't pay attention to

Some countries prescribe opioids to addicts to help them taper off or deal with withdrawal. Do you do that here?

That's called substitution therapy basically used for street drug users. Here we don't do that, we give them medicine that treats the symptoms of withdrawal themselves like fever etc. Substitution therapy is not applicable in Pakistan because of religious problems as even synthetic opioids are a drug themselves, and here controlling supply is difficult and addicts can just get them from the black market then.

What is your process for treating and rehabilitating patients?

We have psychiatric evaluations first. Almost 90% of the patients we get here have underlying mental illnesses. We give them medicine for withdrawals, they have regular checkups, and we also educate the patients. If the patient has some other disease like TB, we send them to get treated for that before they come here because we have a very limited capacity compared to the number of patients.

What do you think the government should be doing different?

There are no long term rehabilitation centres in Pakistan, The biggest problem is that patients get treated here and then once they leave they go back to the same group of friends and fall back into drug abuse. Lack of family support is also a big problem. Lots of families don't ever come back, we have some patients here since 6 months who have been treated but they have nowhere to go to, their family doesn't want them back so even if they do leave they don't have the support system necessary to live sober.

Awareness programs should be done on rehabilitation centres and also to reduce stigma because people think of addiction as a criminal issue rather than a medical one, and they need to realize that these people are mentally ill and are suffering from their lifestyle, and they aren't doing this on purpose. Drug trafficking is also a big problem. Also patients should get proper psychiatric sessions because often we find the issue isn't drug use but some underlying mental illness that they are coping with.