myths and facts for policy makers responsible for substance dependence prevention, treatment and support programs

People with health problems should receive and benefit from health services and not punishment. The possible short and long term consequences of substance use include: mortality, morbidity, comorbidity, social isolation and stigma. People with substance dependence are among the most marginalized in societies and are in need of treatment and care. To incarcerate offenders for drug use and dependence is not an effective prevention or treatment strategy.

Substance users do not receive sufficient punishment.

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Drug and alcohol using behaviors are dynamic, with emergent patterns changing depending on factors such as: availability of drugs, introduction of new drugs, new modes of administration and rapid social change. More research is necessary to develop new treatments and preventive strategies, and to better understand the complex interplay between substance dependence and other risky behaviors. The new challenges of this decade of drug control call for new focus for further research.

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There is strong evidence showing an increase in drug-related problems in developing countries with a significant impact on mortality, disease and injury. These problems affect more the poor, and are more prevalent among the poor in developed countries too.

Myth 5. Drug and alcohol related problems only affect individuals in developed countries.

Myth 6. There is already enough research for policy making on drug and alcohol related problems, there is no need for more.

Myth 7. Substance users do not receive sufficient punishment.

Myth 8. All that is needed to cure dependence is treatment centers. • once you are in, you are cured

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Myth 35. Drug and alcohol related problems only affect individuals in developed countries.
Myth 1. Drug dependence is simply a failure of will or of strength of character

Drug dependence is a brain disorder and people with drug dependence have altered brain function and function it’s true.

Myth 2. People who have drug dependence can easily move back to occasional use

Drug dependence is difficult to control due to compulsive drug use and craving leading to drug seeking and repetitive use, even in the face of negative health and social consequences.

Myth 3. It’s not worthwhile to invest in treatment for individuals who have drug dependence - it is a waste of public funds

Investing in evidence-based treatment for substance dependence decreases health consequences and social effects. A $1 invested in treatment is returned $7 in cost-savings.

Myth 4. People in my country do not have drug-related problems

No country is immune to substance related problems. Substance use disorders are found among men, women and youth. Incidence of substance dependence is on the rise, and in many countries substance use is the driving force for other epidemics.

Stop exclusion - Dare to care

Contact: Dr. Maristela Monteiro
Management of Substance Dependence
World Health Organization
20 Avenue Appia
1211 Geneva, Switzerland
Tel +41 22 791 47 91
Fax +41 22 791 48 51
email: monteirom@who.int

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