

The Drugs, Lethal Substances Which Have Become Elixir

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ABSTRACT: The drugs are substances which have found receptors in our organism and act by increasing, slowing down or changing the processes of the organ. The scientists have reached a long time ago the conclusion that there exists a biological foundation for the drug dependency. A repeated usage or consumption of some large dosages can represent a serious threat regarding the health state of the individual. Those who abuse a drug are those who not only used it frequently but consider also that they cannot live without it, leading to dependency. This phenomenon regarding the dependency existed during the entire history, yet from the oldest times, people knew also the properties of the drugs, these being used for various purposes, religious, therapeutic, relaxation, etc. In the past, as well as nowadays, the drug was and is considered a substance which can be used in therapy due to some curative properties, but whose effect is sometimes uncertain and deadly for the organism.

KEYWORDS: victim, elixir, drug, substance, organism

Introduction

Ever since the Antiquity, using drugs, no matter their type has as purpose the religious or ritualistic activities (Rascanu and Zivari 2002, 1), and later, these became known also due to the therapeutic properties. In the prehistoric period, roots, herbs and leaves were used for therapeutic purpose for calming the pain and healing certain disorders, but in addition to the pleasant sensations, it was acknowledged also some strange ones which deformed the passing of time, the perception of sounds and of the colours (Buzatu 2012, 27).

The aromatic plants or the medicinal plants cannot harm, but, on the contrary, if they are mixed with synthetic drugs produce the harmful effects for the human body. Therefore, the hallucinogen plants should be named drugs since to the psychotropic effects of the plants it is added also the harmful effects of the drugs with which they are "improved" (Buzatu 2015, 7).

The drug is psycho-social and cultural reality which was born at the same as the humanity, and its origin must be searched in the antic civilisations which used within the religious rituals the smoke of the aromatic plants or that of the mushroom with hallucinogen effect or with stimulant effect, by the priests or which doctors with the purpose of submitting and controlling the mass of followers (Buzatu 2015, 11).

According to the order of their mentioning, the oldest attestations regarding the narcotic drugs are done in the Sumerian tablets of Mesopotamia, approximately 7000 years ago. These referred to poppy, of which the opium and its derivatives were produced (Griffith 2006, 110).

From the pharmaceutical point of view, the drugs represent the raw material of vegetal, animal or mineral origin which can be used for the preparation of certain drugs, and, at the same time, they can inhibit the nervous centres, causing physical and psychic changes of the organism. The pharmacology frequently uses the notion of "drug abuse" in order to designate those substances which, through their abusive usage, can lead to physical or psychic dependency or to severe disorders of the mental activity, perception or behaviour, in connection with the administered dosage, it actioning firstly as narcotics and then as hallucinogens.

The drug is a psychotropic substance, acting with predilection upon the central nervous system as its stimulant (excitement) or as sedative of the mental activity. The drugs have become a health issue, both for the individual-consumer, as well as for those around him/her, namely a public health issue due to his/her behaviour disorders (Abraham 2005, 106).

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The opium, as medicinal preparation, was mentioned by Scriponius Largus in 46 b.Ch. (Drăgan 1994, 18). According to the sources, the moment in which the opium entered the Chinese pharmacopeia was signalled during the Tang dynasty (618-906), although some authors sustain that the opium was used in China for hundreds of years before.

It was acknowledged that the opium, even though it was part of the category of toxic substances, with the narcotic properties, being extracted from the capsules of some pope species (*Papaveraceae*), could be used as sleeping, calming, analgesic and narcotic agent.

The pope can be characterised without mistake as a true vegetable JANUS, it combines the properties of an exceptional value with the maleficent ones. It is a very old acquaintance of humankind, but from when, nobody can say for sure (Abraham 2005, 46).

Morphine, extracted from white poppy, is used also today especially as analgesic and sedative as well as for the treatment of the depressions. It is a white powder, soluble in water, with bitter taste. For 100 years, it was considered the most powerful analgesic, being used for therapeutic purposes. The morphine is administered in our days under the form of pill or injectable, its effect being much stronger than the opium.

The codeine is an isolated opium alkaloid, yet its effects are much weaker than those of the morphine. In our days, it is used as treatment for calming the cough or as analgesic.

From the cannabis, *Cannabis Sativa L.*, known under the name of “Indian hemp” the hashish and marijuana are extracted. The hashish is a much more powerful substance obtained from the cannabis raisin, and the marijuana is obtained from the leaf of this plant.

The first written mentioning appears in a medicine book from the 2nd century, in China, named “Treaty about plants”. Marijuana was used as analgesic 5.000 years ago. The old Assyrians, Persians, Romans and Indians used this drug to control the muscular spasms, for calming the pain, as well as treating the indigestion. Moreover, it was used by the African miners in order to ease their difficult work, and the Jamaicans were consuming it at the end of the day in order to get rid of the tiredness. In the 19th century, it was used for treating headaches, labour, insomnia and menstrual pain and in our days it is used for treating the glaucoma and certain ocular disorders linked to the optic nerve as well as in the treatment of some diseases using traditional medicine in Africa and Asia.

The hashish was used for thousands of years and it was mentioned in the Asiatic legends as being a substance which once consumed creates a hallucinating and euphoric state. Herodotus, the father of history, describes the habit of the Scythian tribes from the Caspic Sea who used to place wet hemp seeds on hot rocks and inhale then the resulting mesmerising vapours. The hashish represented for the old Egyptians and for the old Indians a bringer of happiness and a medicine, serving moreover to sustaining some religious ceremonies when its consumption was accompanied by songs and prayers. Moreover, the hashish was served at weddings, it was offered to the relatives and friends who were embarking on a journey, and for the Mahomedan tribes in the Northern India, “the hemp” was considered a sacred plant.

The Indian hemp spread fast on the Eastern coast of Africa and, from here, in Latin America, where the natives considered it as a gift, but consumed it intensely. In Brazil, the hemp arrived brought by the slaves from the Western coast of Africa.

Giovanni Bocaccio describes in “The Decameron” the effects of the hashish; the same thing does Alexandre Dumas in “The count of Monte Cristo”, and Baudelaire, a big consumer of marijuana writes “Artificial paradise” as praise for the virtues of this drug (Stancu 2015, 690). More than 1000 years ago, the natives of South America de Sud were chewing the leaf of the *Erythroxylon coca* plant, a plant rich in nutrients, alkaloids and cocaine. Traces of leaf were found in the Peruvian mummies and there are also traces regarding their use as anaesthetic for the trepanation.

When the Spanish arrived, most ignored the saying of the locals, that the leaf had energising properties, but after they convinced themselves that it was so, they legalised and taxed the cultures. In the 16th century chronicles, it is mentioned the consumption of the tobacco and coca mixture in order

to induce a state of trance, as well as the curative effects of the plant used also for the treatment of the wounds.

The alkaloid was isolated for the first time in 1859 by a PhD candidate at the University of Göttingen, Albert Niemann, who described its structure and the features of the chemical reactions. The first biomimetic synthesis of the organic compound was achieved, however, at the end of the century. Also, then the cocaine began to be popularised in the academic community. Among the first who used and promoted the drug was also Sigmund Freud, who recommended it for the treatment of the depressive episodes and of impotence.

In an article from 1884 in which it was mentioned the benefits, it was called the “magical substance”. Although, it was observed the deadly effects both on the physical as well as on the psychic level, the drug continued to be prescribed. A friend of theirs ended up suffering major hallucinations and although it was believed that no lethal dosage existed for people, one of the patients died. The cocaine was also used for treating the morphine dependency and in Germany, the clinics applied it in the local anaesthesia. Numerous medications appeared which exploited the analgesic properties, including hard drops for the children’s tooth pain (Manea 2019, 1).

Sigismund Freud, neuropsychiatric physician and founder of the psychoanalyst school of psychology thought that in cocaine he found a solution which removes the exhaustion state in front of the extended intellectual effort.

A discovery was extremely important for his medical carrier because the studies regarding this were at the beginning: „if everything went well – he wrote to his fiancé, after he already tried cocaine, even prescribing it in two cases – I will write a study about this (substance) and I expect it to win a place in the therapy together with the morphine and even above it. I have also other hopes and intentions with regard to it. I take very small dosages against depression and indigestion, with the most brilliant result... To be brief, only now I feel that I am a physician, when I have helped a patient and I hope to help many others. If things go well, we should have no other worry regarding the possibility of being together and staying in Wien”.

In the next period, Freud’s letters on the theme of the cocaine continued on the same enthusiastic tone: „at the last severe depression, I took again coca (actually, cocaine, the alkaloid based on the coca leaf – author’s note) and a small dose lift me to heights in a wonderful manner. Right now, I am busy gathering the references for an ode in honour of this magical substance”.

His professional ambition was the same as that of his brethren, and of the discovery of a universal cure; or, however, of a „magical” substance, a „gift of the gods in order to satisfy hunger, fortify the tired ones and make the unhappy forget their sadness” (as Freud himself wrote).

The observations of his own symptoms concentrate upon improving the depression, reinvigorating the increase of the labour capacity (physical and psychic), without having symptoms of some adverse effects.

However, the enthusiastic episode was going to be followed by a powerful disillusion, because the cocaine was going to reveal gradually the dangers. The clinical observation will provide arguments in this regard, including through the example of some close ones, such as the friend Fleischl, who, consuming regularly large quantities (twenty times more than Freud himself) developed a dependency and a terrible cocaine-related psychosis (Fatu-Tutoveanu 2019,1).

The drug is a psychotropic substance, acting with predilection upon the central nervous system as stimulant (exciting element) for it or as sedative of the mental activities. The drugs ended up a health issue, both for the individual consumer, as well as for those around him/her, namely a public health issue due to his/her behaviour disorders (Abraham 2005, 106). In our days, these substances became the enemy of the modern man produces year after year more and more victims, being a very difficult to control phenomenon. Usually, the individual wishes to use the drugs for personal and recreational purpose, yet in almost all the cases he/she ends up being dependent of its consumption. The uncontrolled drug consumption can lead to behavioural, thinking changes, as well as changes of the proper functioning of the organism, changes which can lead to the death of the person.

The depressants decrease the activity of the central nervous system, slowing down the vital functions and the reflexes, they calm and, moreover, relax. In well-established dosages, they are used in medicine, especially as sedative and for inducing the sign.

The hallucinogens lead to the apparition of some sensorial illusions or hallucinations which, simulating the physical functions, give the sensation of force, belief in oneself, but in larger dosages produce delirium, panic, aggressive and irrational behaviour.

The analgesics influence the reaction to pain, diminishing or removing the psychic disorders which accompany it (anxiety, indisposition) (Drăgan 1994, 41).

In order to reduce significantly the number of those who end up a victim of the drugs, an important role is held by the school, but also by the family, maintaining thus the health of the future generation. In comparison to the mature population, the young population is much more open to the new, and more predisposed to the new experiences, to risk (Buzatu 2012, 94).

At the same time with the evolution of society, the desire to obtain a fast profit and enrichment of some persons lead to the spread of drugs on the market and automatically to the increase of consumption in an uncontrolled manner. There are millions of people in the entire world who end up abusing, becoming victims of the usage of such substances. And they are not the only ones who enter in this vicious circle. In reality, the family and the close ones suffer and sometimes, in their turn, become victims.

Conclusions

The drug consumers are seen by the society as being sick persons or persons who have a vice which they could not renounce. They come from various social environments and the reasons which determine them to consume drugs are various. The desire to experiment new things, the surrounding, family issues, lack of a job, etc., can lead to the consumption of psycho-active substances. Following the repeated and repeated consumption there exists the possibility for the apparition of a psychic dependency.

Once they become dependent on the drug consumption, they need the support of the family, friends, colleagues in order to obtain all the information necessary regarding the danger of using in an irrational manner these substances as well as determining them to renounce the consumption. For such situations medical, social, psychologic anti-dependency, counselling and reinsertion programs appeared.

The first signs which can be observed in the case of the drug consumption are:

- Fluctuations of the emotional state;
- The attempt of the individual to hide the problems he/she is facing;
- Finding excuses or using lies to cover up some situations;
- Committing some fraud or theft deeds;
- Tendency to neglect the professional or school activities;
- Negligence regarding the personal care.

There are many types of drugs which can be included in the category of legal or illegal substances. Moreover, these can be useful or harmful drugs, drugs which cause secondary effects or risks when they are administered in an uncontrolled manner.

Using drugs for medical purposes remains a controversial subject. The drugs represent a foreign substance for the human organism and which, once reaching the organism, produces structural and functional changes to it.

The irrational consumption of these substances can lead to negative important consequences upon the human organism. However, the researchers continue to discover a surprising number of benefits of the drugs used for medical and scientific purpose.

Due to the benefits accompanying them, nowadays there are countries which have relaxed the position regarding the cultivation, production, distribution and consumption of drugs and other countries agree, partially, to regulate from the legislative point of view the usage of narcotics strictly for therapeutic purposes.

The negative effects produced upon the health by using these substances in an uncontrolled manner are real and known worldwide. Because of this, their administration must be done only for medical purpose and under strict surveillance.

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