

Study of Cocaine Abuse in Hong Kong

Report to the Narcotics Division

Executive Summary

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1 Research Objectives

Recent years have witnessed an increase of cocaine users in Hong Kong based on the Central Registry of Drug Abuse (CRDA) data. This study aims to review the literature on cocaine abuse in overseas countries and to explore the characteristics of cocaine abusers in Hong Kong.

2 Research Methods

We conducted an extensive literature review and administered interviews with three groups of respondents: 31 cocaine abusers, 20 frontline workers with rich experience in drug rehabilitation and treatment, and 10 drug law enforcement officers.

3 Research Findings

3.1 The Ecological Model

We developed an ecological model to synthesize the literature on risk/protective factors for cocaine abuse at the individual, interpersonal, community and societal levels; the harmful effects of cocaine abuse; and rehabilitation and treatment of cocaine abuse.

3.2 Interviews with the Professionals

The interviews with the respondents confirmed the recent upward trend in cocaine abuse in Hong Kong and highlighted the role the recent declining price of cocaine plays in increased cocaine use. The risk/protective factors on cocaine abuse identified by drug rehabilitation and treatment front-line workers include family bonding, peer influence, poor school bonding, influences from the triads, curiosity, myths of cocaine, and declining prices of cocaine.

3.3 Characteristics of Cocaine Users

The sample of cocaine users in this study demonstrated a series of characteristics.

They preferred using crack cocaine via the smoking route of administration; Most of them were introduced to cocaine by friends; Most of them obtained cocaine by paying drug dealers or friends and a substantial number of them used delivery service; They considered as fairly easy to obtain cocaine in Hong Kong; Over half of them used cocaine more than 10 times per month (54.8%), and 16.1% of them used it once or twice a day; The majority of them were poly drug users (77.4%); About two-thirds of them were cocaine dependent, and a quarter of them met the criteria of cocaine abuse; Most of them (83.9%) had prior experience of drug treatment, and some of them relapsed on the day of discharge; Their expenses on cocaine in the past year varied widely, with some spending as much as \$350,000 and some spending less than \$2,800 during the past year; and a large number of them were involved in drug dealing and created considerable income by dealing with drugs.

4 Discussion and Recommendations

Based on the literature and the empirical findings, the study discussed the implications and recommendations for Anti-drug Policies and Services in Hong Kong:

- 4.1 Setting up a working group on anti-cocaine campaign
- 4.2 Staff education and training
- 4.3 Content of educational campaign
- 4.4 Suppressive tactics should be used to tackle cocaine use
- 4.5 a holistic approach to treatment
- 4.6 Increase the number of social workers in schools and family settings
- 4.7 Better communication and co-operation between professionals and workers

The first three are oriented towards preventive education and publicity and the rest of the four are oriented towards supply and demand control.