

Knowledge Is Power but It is not Prevention

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In fighting against drug abuse and addiction, on the demand reduction side when we talk about prevention we usually refer to two different activities or endeavors. The first is the primary prevention which is an attempt to hit the nail on the head. It focuses on an attempt to freeze the number of users of dangerous drugs. This type of prevention will help prevent people, old and young, from becoming new users of drugs. The other one is the intervention that aims at decreasing the number of users and addicts. It is the tertiary prevention that designs to keep ex-addicts from relapse and also help them stay clean from other drugs of abuse.

In both categories of prevention, Knowledge and Information is a vital component because it has a major role to play. Especially in primary prevention the role of Knowledge and Information is distinct and can not be overlooked.

Researches have revealed that the causes of drug abuse are multiple and complex. Curiosity, Misbelieves and Misinformation are listed among the complicate socio-economic and environmental predictors of drug abuse. They are all delicately woven together and together they operate as the risk factors that make people jump right into the trap of drug abuse. It is therefore obvious and undisputable that in the case of primary prevention where the prime purpose is to help people make the right judgment and decision not to pick up the self-destructive behavior, the important role of knowledge and information is absolutely undeniable.

Correct and enough information can overrule misinformation and also satisfy curiosity. Well organized set of information will be internalized and turned into the body of Knowledge that can cure misbelieve. In fighting against drugs, we can say that scientific knowledge and correct information about drugs can serve as a basic tool at hands that people can always pick up and use to do away with ignorance that has arisen from misbelieve, curiosity and the lack of information.

More correct information and better knowledge pave the way to a better choice of alternatives. With correct and adequate knowledge and information about drugs, correct judgment and better alternatives to drug abuse can always be made. Without it, proper decision and correct judgment will have to be left in the hands of fate and luck.

In short, providing correct information and appropriate knowledge is nothing but empowering people. It gives people the power that they can use to protect themselves from falling into drug addiction. The other part of the story is how to make effective use of the acquired knowledge and information. The program for prevention of drug abuse that seeks to impart knowledge and information about drugs will never be successful unless it also provides experiences on how to make effective use of the knowledge to evaluate choices of action and arrive at the responsible decision.

With the powerful information dissemination system of the world today, the world atmosphere has already been flooded with drug knowledge and information. The pros and cons of cigarette smoking and drinking of alcohol can be found everywhere in all forms of communication. It is not unreasonable to believe that many, if not all, of those who first pick up smoking and drinking habits have already learned about harmful effects of the substances prior to their first use. There will be thousands of explanation given if we ask them why they choose such a self-destructive alternative.

All the reasons given will fall into one category. That is no other better choices they can think of at that time. It is actually the mismanagement of the problem situation that calls for urgent response. At the time of crisis, either the knowledge they possessed had less chance to function or no chance to function at all. Or it might be that they themselves possessed too weak personality and attitude to resist the temptation. In this confusing situation millions of excuses emerged purely from the inclination to experiment. It finally over flooded the knowledge and all scientific information they already learned.

Under this situation, the power of resistance in them either had no chance to function at all or ceased to function and died away. It is true that knowledge is power but in some instances inclination to abuse drug that emerges from inside oneself seems to be more powerful.

In practice, knowledge is only a means to prevention and not prevention in itself. We have to remember that knowledge can be power only if it is seeded into the attitude of the person and the person himself is moved by it. Therefore, it is the responsibility of prevention practitioners to try by all means to impart the knowledge in a way that attitudinal change is attained and the dangers of drug abuse and the cost it incurred to the family and social life of the abusers are well aware. To insure such impact the participatory learning process must be applied.

Moreover, if we try to look at the drug abuse prevention from the socio-economic angle, we will find that knowledge and awareness as such is still not enough. The skill in management of the interactions with people and peers in various social situations is another factor that contributes to successful prevention of drug abuse.

Apart from knowledge and awareness of the dangers of drug abuse, the risk group must be empowered to effectively maneuver themselves safely through the difficult situations they are facing. The personality characters and wisdom leading to the drug free choice of alternatives must be planted and nurtured. They must learn the ethical values, have a clear self understanding and acquire an integrated set of the psycho-social competencies. I choose to call this combined set of personality traits as the Maneuvering skill. Those of you who are interested in the Maneuvering skill concept and practices in more detail please visit our website and click into our e-journal.

In conclusion, I would say that prevention program will never work with knowledge and information dissemination alone. It requires knowledge and information in combination with personality development and skill training in an integrated form delivered through the well planned Maneuvering skill training program.

Abstract

In Demand Reduction prevention refers to two types of programs. The prevention program that attempts to freeze the number of users of dangerous drugs is known as Primary Prevention. The other type of prevention programs known as tertiary prevention tried to keep ex-addicts from relapse and also help them stay clean from other drugs of abuse. This in turns will decrease the number of users and addicts. Knowledge plays an important role in primary prevention. Knowledge about drugs and the cost of drug abuse is the fundamental element of the prevention programs. But for the prevention program to be successful its activities need to focus on change of attitudes, full awareness of the problem and how to make a wise decision in the face of crisis. Knowledge is not prevention in itself.