



Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences Section – 2004

I7 Substance Abuse Among Incarcerated Young Males in the South of France

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After attending this presentation, attendees will become familiar with substance abuse among incarcerated young males in four French detention centers.

This presentation will impact the forensic community and/or humanity by showing a possible relationship between cannabis consumption and psychiatric disorders.

Nature of Study: Descriptive study

Population and Methods: Between June and December 02, 103 males under 18 were incarcerated in four detention centers in the south of France (Montpellier, Toulouse, Nîmes and Perpignan). Among this young population, 51 were questioned and included in the study. Interviews were performed by a resident and data registered by means of a standardized questionnaire. Data collected were age, socio-demographic variables, medical history, consumption of licit and illicit substances according to the DSM IV criteria and psychological disorders (suicidal ideation, insomnia...).

Results: The study concerned only males; the mean age was 16.25 and the age range 13 to 17. 66.6% had used tobacco, 54.9% had used cannabis and 11.8% had used alcohol. 9.8% were still smoking cannabis while in jail. Prior to jail 9.8% were regularly using all together tobacco, cannabis and alcohol. According to this population, their cannabis consumption is mostly due to stress and the seeking of pleasure.

Other substances used were not significant enough to be mentioned in this study. Suicidal ideation was reported in 11% among those who never smoked cannabis and in 42.8% among those who were dependent. There might be a potential relationship between these 2 factors (depression due to weaning in jail or an even more important intoxication among depressed abusers) According to others French studies, it seems that compared to the same age range population, incarcerated young people had a higher level of substances use before going to jail.

Conclusion: In this study, it seems that cannabis consumption and suicidal ideation could be related. On a whole, among incarcerated young people, very few ask for a psychological care. A longer study period with a larger sample would be necessary to assess the need of an early detection of psychiatric disorders in order to provide the psychological support and care.

Substance Abuse, Prisoners, Cannabis