

SUBSTANCE USE IN INDIAN-OCCUPIED KASHMIR

An introduction to the deadly epidemic and the role of colonizing powers

Heroin or "Brown Sugar" use has been on the rise in Kashmir since 2016.

Previously, heroin use was scarce, despite high rates in neighboring countries/regions.

Intravenous heroin use was found to be the **most common issue** among patients in a hospital-based drug de-addiction center in Srinagar (Bhat, Dar & Hussain, 2019).

Drug rehabilitation centers run by Indian state police have been criticized for further stigmatizing substance use treatment by making it less of a medical issue and more of a criminal one.

Kashmiris also fear they will be used for civilizing propaganda, turned into informants, and other potentially **unethical practices**.

Advocates call for more community-based public health initiatives

“ Gateway drug is now straight away heroin - Kashmiri Psychiatrist

“ Here drugs are as easily available as a cigarette. What do you expect will happen? - Kashmiri Psychiatrist

“ It is progressing from neighborhood to neighborhood. Either the state is passively letting this happen or the state is deliberately doing this. -Researcher

“ India is supporting drug abuse in Kashmir for their own interest... These past few years are like nothing I have seen before. -Kashmiri in Recovery

SHARE YOUR STORY

October is Substance Abuse Prevention Month.

We invite you to share as little or as much of your story as you like with our community. See below for an anonymous survey.

<https://tinyurl.com/KashmirDrugSurvey>

Photo: Muzamil Bhat

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For Substance Abuse Prevention Month, we invited Kashmiris to share their stories in the hope that it may provide support to others who may be struggling.

IMPACT OF SUBSTANCE USE/MISUSE

- “ It alienates you from your own self
- “ An old friend of mine is battling with heroin and it's going worse day by day
- “ There was a time when I was a heavy opioid abuser and the only thing I wished for myself was death

ROLE OF THE OCCUPATION & STATE FORCES

Q: What were the factors, circumstances or stressors that contributed most to substance use?

- “ Not allowed to go out due to curfews, strikes, etc.
- “ He couldn't go to school and was extremely frustrated because of it

Q: How did the Indian occupational forces, state agencies or J&K police play a role (if at all) in your story?

- “ They use oppressive techniques to suppress the voice of all who want freedom from the occupational forces by using brutal force and dirty techniques of torture
- “ His dealer for marijuana is a police constable
- “ I have seen officers see people smoking hash and asking for some maal (*drugs*)
- “ Indian government plays a vital role in the substance use epidemic as we can clearly see what they did in Punjab and they are applying the same principle in kashmir
- “ he told me that they have shaken hands with police and now the police is helping them in selling drugs and also providing them drugs to sell

WORDS OF SUPPORT

- “ Don't let it overpower you. The day it wins over you is the day it starts to rule your life
- “ Stay strong, believe in yourself, life is much more than what we think
- “ there is no shame in coming out. You need help and should take it
- “ Inform your parents on the first such use. They would understand and you can be saved no matter how much you would be looked down upon.
- “ Do not think you can help yourself without support system. Naa. Sooner you come to accept help better it's for you.
- “ I would love to know if there is any way I can help my people
- “ Life is a mystery a magic and let the magician guide you

Thank you to all the Kashmiris who have shared their stories. If you are in Kashmir, and struggling with substance use/misuse, consider treatment at a hospital-based center. If you know of any other resources that may help, please let us know.

